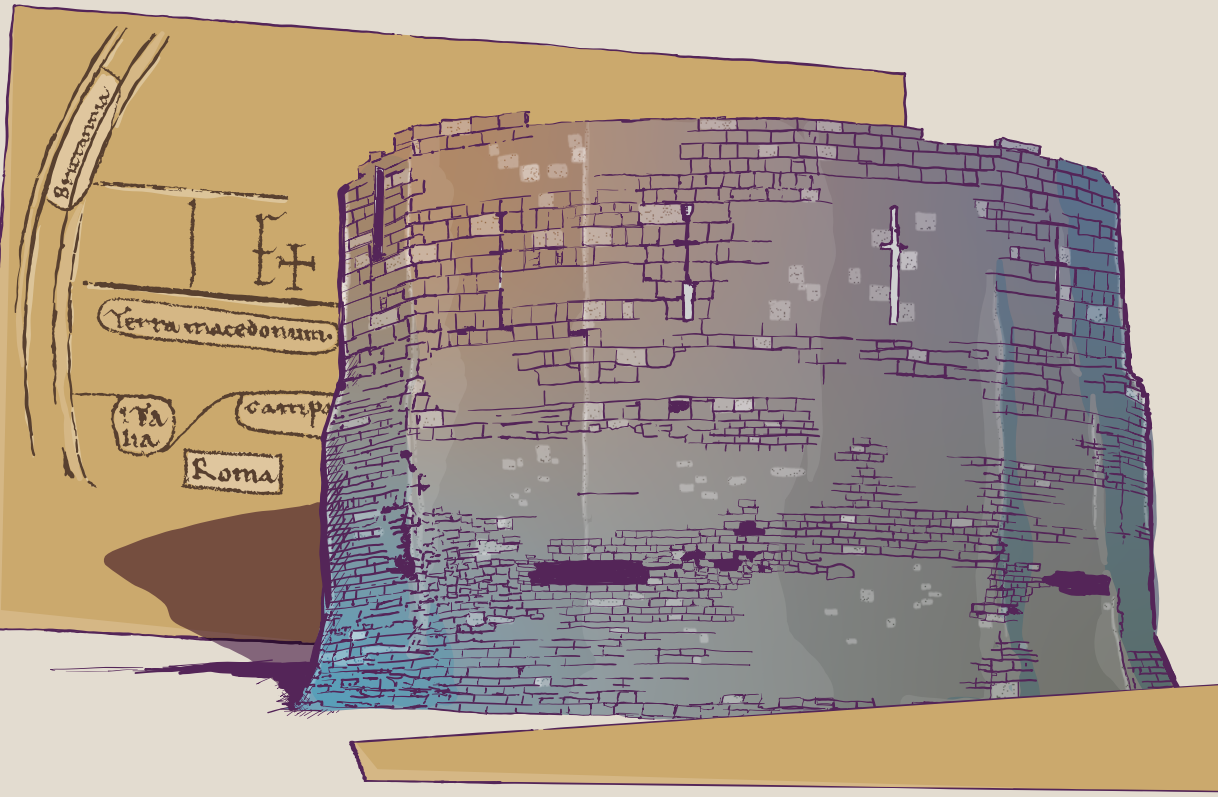

Mateusz Fafinski

Roman Infrastructure in Early Medieval Britain

The Adaptations of the Past in Text and Stone

Amsterdam
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Roman Infrastructure in Early Medieval Britain

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Mateusz Fafinski

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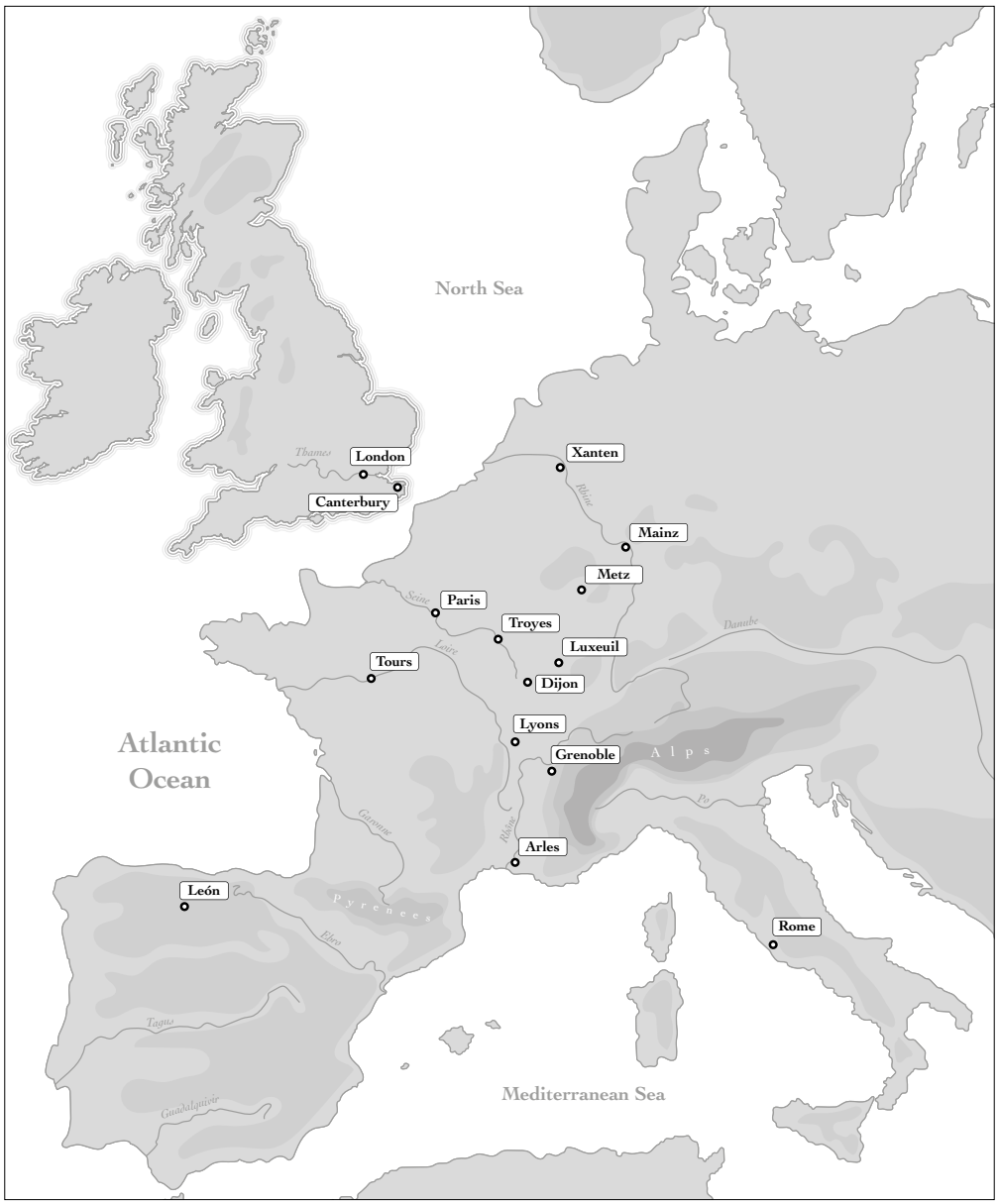
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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations 9

Acknowledgements 11

Prologue 13

I. Frameworks: From Historiography to the Principal Terms 21
1. Infrastructure 21
2. Governance Resource 23
3. Continuity 26
4. Re-Use 32
5. City 35

II. Movements: Charters and Roman Transport Infrastructure 43
1. Writing Roads Down: Roman Roads in Documentary Practice 43
2. The Eastern Charters 49
   2.1 Source Introduction 49
   2.2 Roads and Bridges in Boundary Clauses 51
   2.3 State of Maintenance 61
   2.4 Obligations and Burdens 64
3. The Western Charters 71
   3.1 Source Introduction 71
   3.2 Roads in Western Charters 74
   3.3 Alienation 78
4. Conclusions 81

III. Accomodations: Roman Urban Spaces in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Britain 83
1. A Very Long Goodbye: Recognising Roman Urbanism in Britain 83
2. Urban Spaces in the Sub-Roman Period (c. 382-c. 442) 87
   2.1 Transformations of Roman Towns in Britain 87
2.2 409/410 – the Year(s) Nothing Happened? 91
   2.3 Candidates for Limited Urban Survival 94
   2.4 Coins and Urban Spaces 98
   2.5 Problematising the Shift 100

3. Urban Spaces in the Pre-Conversion Period (c. 442-597) 108
3.1 Tax-Gathering and Re-Use of Roman Towns 108
3.2 Limited Urban Functions and the Idea of Multifocal Governance 113
4. Urban Spaces in the Conversion Period and the Times of Bede (597-735) 120
4.1 The Strategies of Activation 120
4.2 Sources of Authority 128
4.3 Between 'Continuity of Place' and 'Urban Continuity' 131
4.4 Perceiving Roman Urban Spaces 134
5. Conclusions 140

IV. Spaces: The Church and What Rome Left 143
1. Tinkering with the Past: the Church and the Inheritance of Rome 143
2. Law and Space 144
2.1 Regulating the Role of the Church 144
2.2 Acquiring and Granting Space 146
3. Symbolical Geographies 155
3.1 The 'Christian Foundation Legend' and Roman Remains 155
3.2 Recreating Rome 162
3.3 Reoccupying Urban Spaces as Ecclesiastical Capitals 174
4. Memory and Infrastructure 181
4.1 Whithorn and Remembering Rome 181
4.2 Wilfrid and the Importing of Memory 185
5. Conclusions 192

Epilogue 195

Bibliography 199

List of Maps
1. Post-Roman Britain 5
2. Post-Roman West and important places mentioned in the text 6

List of Figures
Figs 1-3. The phases of the creation of the symbolical landscape in Kent 174

List of Abbreviations

ASC	*The Anglo-Saxon chronicle: a collaborative edition*, ed. by D. N. Dumville, Simon Keynes, and Simon Taylor (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983)
ASE	Anglo-Saxon England
ASPR	*The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition,* ed. by George Krapp and Eliot Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-1942)
EME	Early Medieval Europe
HE	Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
GPRE I	*Gregorii I Papae Registrum Epistolarum. Libri I-VII*, ed. by Paul Ewald and Ludwig Hartmann, MGH Epistolae (Berlin, 1891).
GPRE II	*Gregorii I Papae Registrum Epistolarum. Libri VIII-XIV*, ed. by Ludwig Hartmann, MGH Epistolae (Berlin, 1891).
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
	AA Auctores Antiquissimi
	SRG Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum
	SRM Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum
TBEL	*The Beginnings of English Law*
RIB	Roman Inscriptions of Britain

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M.F.
Berlin, February 2021

Prologue

When Augustine landed in Kent in 597, what we call the Roman Empire was still raging against the dying of the light. After a prolonged struggle, the Empire had reconquered Italy (only to lose a large part of it to the Lombards shortly after). It held onto Northern Africa and even, by the thinnest of threads, parts of southern Spain. The economic heartlands in Egypt and Syria were undergoing a kind of golden age. The laws of the Empire had been recently codified once again in an enormous effort, proving the ability to shore up a massive amount of intellectual resources. Roman diplomacy if it did not control, then at least retained the ability to vastly influence those parts of the Empire that – no doubt, in the minds of courtly panegyrists and propagandists, temporarily – found themselves outside its borders.

But, as is the case so often with revivals, it was no longer the same old Rome, although its political and literary class did their utmost to pretend otherwise. Its point of gravity was in the East. Its machinery altered, its interests more divided. It was a late act, an empire transformed: its landscape was different from one, two, or three hundred years before; its infrastructure was weaker, its resources spread thinner over too large a territory. Nevertheless, at this moment, when the mission sent by Pope Gregory landed on the shores of Kent, nothing was yet decided, it was still the Empire. The members of the mission knew they were part of a world which had adapted, but in no way did they think of their world as a world in decline and fall.

What they encountered on the island of Britain differed greatly from what the Empire on its last tour looked like. Nonetheless, Rome was here too. On this island that Belisarius in his hubris reportedly wanted to give to the Goths in exchange for Sicily sixty years before, Roman roads still criss-crossed the landscape. Some (if not most) had different functions than transportation, but their gravitational pull still warped the environment around them. Roman city walls surrounded the now mostly empty urban spaces. Roman forts dotted the shore. Underneath this visible infrastructure, even more Roman legacy could be found.

No wonder then that when the mission took to its religious and imperial task, Britain was transformed as well. During a span of no more than two generations, Britain became a succesful cover act of its former metropolis, a spiritual province of an empire. And when the Empire, under the stress and reorganisation of the seventh century, withdrew to the East, shrank and transformed even more, to finally leave its Late Antique form, the attachment to the *idea* of Rome did not die in Britain. What made it possible, apart from

the intellectual infrastructure, were also in great part the material and symbolic infrastructures, which history this book tries to tell.

Both in their material and symbolic forms infrastuctures can work in ways that are not immediately obvious. They can exert an influence long after the actors who built them are gone. They can also become dormant and be reactivated again, change function, role, and appearance. Their story is not a simple story of continuity and discontinuity; it is one of adaptation and distinction.

Infrastructures and their survival have become a mark of advancement, a pulse of civilisation beating in the background of historical events. The idea is far from new – Bede wrote admiringly of the Romans, mentioning the cities and forts and roads that they built in Britain.[1] Gildas, although grudgingly, betrayed a stronger attachment to Rome and its trappings than he perhaps cared to admit.[2] Historians all too often take this attitude towards infrastructure (both material and immaterial) as a mark of quality. If societies took care of their infrastructure, they underwent a transformation. If they did not, they collapsed. This is a lazy metric. It provides a reductive approach to the dialectic of transformation/collapse. It is a metric trapped in a false idea of progress.

Sometimes even a memory of Roman infrastructure could exert a tremendous pull on the landscape and societies of Early Medieval Britain. Managing this infrastructural past, or even pasts, was a major activity in Britain during this period, which both generated and required adequate resources. Ignoring that aspect, that ability for infrastructures to be phantom as well as material, would mean providing an incomplete picture.

In an almost impossible feat, through ingenious use of architecture, Early Medieval Britain was able to create new memories of Rome. The crypts of Hexham and Ripon were grand memory theatres, able to evoke both the Roman past and the present of Christian Rome, but also to create memories of Rome in their visitors even though the empire itself was gone. Thomas Aquinas, five centuries after they were built, posited that a soul can only recall and cannot produce new memories, which only a body is able to do.[3] With that quip in mind we can see how Rome was present in Early Medieval Britain not only in spirit.

The infrastructural landscape was then shaped with a great understanding of memory and mnemonics – systems for improving and assisting memory.

1 HE, I.11.

2 Gildas, chap. 13-14.

3 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 73.

In this the inheritance of Rome shows as well, for the use of architecture to shape and direct memory is a well-attested classical tradition.[4] The High Medieval culture was chiefly memorial but already in the Early Middle Ages we see the roots of this practice.[5] And not only the roots; creative ways of applying it to shape the lived-in environment and the development of documentary practice. Adaptation is crucial for this process, as memory involves the passage of time and recollecting Rome is something different to recognising it.[6] Thus, studying the adaptations of post-Roman Britain is inseparable from studying the systems of memory.

The study of memory is thus one of the important methodological frameworks in this narrative. In order to understand what was being done with past infrastructures, we need more such frameworks and approaches that will allow us to see not only more of the additional functions of infrastructures but also additional facets of our sources, thus enabling us to see the connections between them. But there is no universal way to explain the modes in which Roman infrastructure functioned in Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain. The post-Roman landscape that emerges from our investigations is distinctively regionalised and varied. It is precisely this variation which advocates the use of a wide approach. To finally look at the island beyond the divide between the 'British' and 'English' material and to place them side by side in conversation. For the biggest differences are to be found precisely on a regional level and not on the, somewhat artificial, divide between what is seen as 'British' and 'English'. It is perhaps a testimony to the persuasive ability of writers like Bede that we are still trapped in this distinction. That methodological divide also contributes to our commitment to the dichotomy of continuity and discontinuity.

We can try to avoid being trapped in the dichotomy of continuity and discontinuity if we approach the connections between the infrastructures and the sources that describe them from a different angle. One of the chief impulses behind this book was a deep methodological unease with the idea of 'continuity'. Thus, the very understanding of continuity for the Early Medieval and Late Antique actors is put into question here. What we actually observe as Roman to Late Antique to Early Medieval continuity can be seen as, in reality, pluralistic strategies of maintaining distinction. This distinction opperates on many levels: as past objects, as legal spaces, and as urban spaces. From this perspective continuity is a term coined

4 Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechink*.
5 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 9.
6 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 76.

by us, the modern researchers, always on the lookout for the unbroken afterlife of Rome. Our understanding of continuity carried at the most very little currency for the inhabitants of Late Antique or Early Medieval Britain. Even more so since what we often take as a manifestation of discontinuity – like the evacuation of cities to hill-forts which is discussed in this book[7] – was for them a preservation of a very Roman *habitus*, a mode of action.[8] This multitude of processes of adaptation created, even on such a geographically constrained area as Britain, a number of very different approaches to *Romanitas*. In this, maintaining a distinction of singular or collected elements of infrastructure becomes part of the strategy of maintaining a horizontal distinction in the post-Roman and Early Medieval society.[9]

Romanitas could only be performed if a distinction was retained. Maintaining a distinct character of, for example, former urban space, seemed to matter for the actors in Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain. This distinction is reflected in the language they used for infrastructures inherited from the Roman past but also in what they used those infrastructures for. While this understanding of distinction that we use here is different both from the original meaning by Bourdieu and from the ethnicity-centred reworking proposed by Pohl, it maintains a strong connection with both. The distinction of the Roman character of infrastructure was crucial both for operating the 'market of symbolic resources' and the creation of identity in post-Roman Britain.[10] Insofar as this book is also an experiment to try to look for the strategies of adaptation and activation of what was left by the Romans – the roads, the urban spaces, the forts – it is also concerned with the ruins. By entering into a conversation with the concept of distinction we can understand not only our sources better but also ways in which the societies of post-Roman Britain interacted with those remains.

The Roman infrastructural remains constituted resources that could be at the disposal of the post-Roman polities. But their activation as governance resources was costly – Roman infrastructures, both physical and symbolic, were a product of a bureaucratised state, a state able to muster assets that from the perspective of post-Roman Britain were massive. Therefore, converting those resources into instruments that could produce tangible benefits was often beyond the scope of those polities.

7 *Vita Lupi Episcopi Trecensis*, chap. 6.
8 Bourdieu, *Outline of the Theory of Practice*, 72-95.
9 Pohl, 'Introduction: Strategies of Distinction', 5-6.
10 Bourdieu, 'Le marché des biens symboliques'.

The two modes of use of Roman infrastructure that we can distinguish in our sources, both functional and symbolic, required different kinds of activation strategies and a different cost. Even physical remains, like roads, milestones, cities or ruins could be used as symbolic resources. It might be easier to maintain a memory of a Roman origin of a road than to maintain its surface in a traversable state. But we cannot underestimate the symbolic activation of Roman infrastructures as a process requiring a lesser effort. In fact, in some circumstances it might have been even more costly. And we can see the symbolic investment in Roman infrastructures in our sources: how authors like Bede use the symbolic value of the past infrastructures to strengthen contemporary arguments; how this investment in the Roman past allows Bede to see himself, and his Church, as Roman.[11]

Seeing that interface requires an approach that simultaneously recognises the multitude of adaptation strategies in post-Roman Britain and the more general drive to capitalise on the Roman past, recognising that symbolical systems could be instruments of power. Those instruments allow two activities crucial from the point of view of Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain: a communication between cultural and language spheres and the achievement of a consensus inside a – at least superficially – similarly structured world.[12] From the point of view of the rulers of post-Roman polities, this meant that symbolical systems built from those resources could be important instruments of power and legitimacy. By becoming part of the symbolic capital, they could be made productive.[13] Harnessing them, even in a haphazard way, meant tangible benefits in internal organisation and an ability to navigate the post-Roman West. To attain this symbolic capital meant that a form of symbolic productive monopoly was needed; in Early Medieval Britain this took the form of a claim to a status of being the successor state of Rome.[14] The attainment of this 'monopoly' required the production of (post-)Roman meaning. The kings giving charters in Roman cities, Bede's conflict with the British Church, or Wilfrid building churches from Roman stones, are, as we shall see throughout this book, also a form of production of the past. Memory of the past enables the activation of Roman infrastructures as symbolic instruments. It was also a powerful tool which enabled the rulers to enter

11 Hilliard, 'Bede and the Changing Image of Rome and the Romans'; Moore, 'Bede's Devotion to Rome'.

12 Bourdieu, 'Éléments pour une théorie de la production', 752.

13 Bourdieu, *Outline of the Theory of Practice*, 171-182.

14 Bourdieu, 'Éléments pour une théorie de la production', 759.

into a conversation with contemporary Rome – like Oswiu, stylising himself as a ruler of a post-Roman polity, with his palace in *Ad Murum* on Hadrian's Wall and his decisive step towards Roman Easter as the Easter of the post-Roman world.[15]

For all of this to matter Rome must have been a form of a tangible administrative example and the feeling of belonging to a circle of successor states must have been something real for the rulers of early polities in Britain. And indeed, when we look across our written sources, from Gildas referring to Roman practices (even if begrudgingly), through Bede casting Angles, Saxons and Jutes as the inheritors of Roman bridges, streets and cities of Britain and Welsh rulers deriving their genealogies from Roman emperors to Gregory the Great using imperial parallels in his correspondence with Aethelberht and Bertha, we see that such sentiments were not alien to the actors in Early Medieval Britain.

This means that distinction mattered because only a governance resource that could be seen as distinct in its Roman sense carried this added value or was able to be activated as such. Moreover, very often this distinction was maintained by using instruments that were essentially Roman in their nature. What we might observe as discontinuity is just (and as much as) adaptation. The great paradox of some of the more successful adaptation strategies in Britain, but also in the broader view of the post-Roman West, is that while rooted in an essentially Roman framework they lead to a repurposing beyond recognition and thus to a loss of distinction. We often take the manifestation of such a process (like dismantling a Roman fort to build a church) as discontinuity while the underlying praxis that lead to its end result was clearly rooted in the Roman past.

A vast majority of Roman infrastructures in Britain could not be possibly activated as governance resources by the polities in the post-Roman period. A city with baths and paved streets is useless without an imperial or Church bureaucracy, its amenities almost impossible to maintain without a tax revenue. There are other, more cost-effective strategies for fulfilling its functions. But it can still be valuable to maintain its distinction – both in memory and on the ground – for the purposes of activating it as a symbolical instrument. It was important for the drafters of charters and for Bede when he wrote about the *civitates* in Britain. A story, a tale, can bring you a bigger return on your investment in the Roman past than the actual bricks and mortar from which buildings were made. Roman infrastructures could move between functional and symbolic uses.

15 HE, III, 21.

Strategies of activation are essentially means within which a resource can be put to use. A charter is a great example of such a strategy, as it offers multiple possibilities, both functional and symbolic. A Roman road or a Roman milestone can be used as a boundary marker; a charter can be given in a Roman city, thus using the sense of a place as a factor boosting the legitimacy of a ruler; the terminology used in a charter can refer to a purported or real knowledge of the Roman past, thus giving an anchoring to the actors involved. Similar strategies relying on the past can be seen in chronicles and laws.[16] Such approach to our sources, as elements of the adaptation process, but which still maintained a distinction of the Roman character, can make us better understand the relationship between the written sources and infrastructures. Evan a ruin can be symbolically and functionally activated. The stones can be re-used, both in a practical sense and to carry meaning and memory. The actual perimeters of walls can be repurposed. The memory of a distinctive character of an urban precinct, for example, can be a powerful tool as well. Adaptation is therefore not methodologically opposed to transformation. But it stresses better the nature of the framework in which those processes started.

The chosen time span, between roughly the end of the fourth century and the middle of the eighth century, is the period of transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages in the post-Roman West. The structure of the book is thematic. Organising the material into problems and thematic topics is the most productive way to analyse it. This means that we can also see the evolution of the terms and concepts that we discuss here over time. We can also see inherent tensions instead of overlooking them, like the friction between the royal and ecclesiastical actors evident in the last chapter, or the tension between the chronologies of 'Eastern' and 'Western' charters. Some of those tensions cannot be reconciled with the evidence that we have at hand. Instead of trying to remove it, we can try to show it.

One of the chief hypotheses of this book is that the way Roman infrastructure was used and re-used in Britain throughout that time showed on the one hand a high degree of regionalisation, but on the other was also exhibiting similar characteristics to the processes that were similarly happening on the Continent over the same period. But such claims require a firm methodological footing in the subject. While reviewing major points of scholarship, the first chapter attempts to set out the working definitions of the key theoretical notions, providing an ad hoc structure for interdisciplinary Medieval infrastructure methodology. It advocates on the one hand

16 Reimitz, *History and Frankish Identity*, 410-443.

a broad understanding of terms such as infrastructure, and on the other the rejection of simple methodological dichotomies. I have then attempted to build up the argument proceeding from the material foundations to symbolic interpretations in chapters about infrastructures of transport through urbanism to the infrastructures and the Church. This layered approach hopefully allows for the progressive introduction of new values of Roman infrastructure as they appeared alongside the developments in the social, political and religious landscape of Britain. This book is then, in essence, a story of how the Roman infrastructural past was used and re-used, but also exerted a pull on the societies of Britain in that time of adaptation.

I. Frameworks: From Historiography to the Principal Terms

1. Infrastructure

The period between the gradual adaptation of the Roman administrative system into the Early Medieval one and the twelfth century has been seen as a time when infrastructure was of little or no importance to the polities and their rulers, its revival initiated only by the process of centralisation and the increasing role of trade in the High and Late Middle Ages.[1] Nevertheless, as much as a lowering of infrastructural standards is undeniable, *ad hoc* and low-level maintenance and management strategies had supplanted the Roman administrative system with varying degrees of success already before 800. Both on the Continent (especially in the Frankish and Arab worlds)[2] and in Britain infrastructural maintenance gained gradually a more regular and concrete form, secured by law, even though the evidence we possess has (at least initially) a military feel to it.[3] With time maintenance of infrastrucutre attained a more prominent role. Work on antique roads for example features prominently in Carolingian and Ottonian infrastructural politics.[4]

Infrastructure can be defined as a set of 'underlying physical networks'.[5] But in the Early Medieval context in Britain this has to be enlarged to include also the disjointed elements of former physical networks – singular elements like fragments of serviceable roads, bridges, and fortifications or mile stations and granaries. Ruins form a crucial part of infrastructure as well, being a ready source of building material, and possessing a highly symbolic value.[6] The power of ruins as useful and powerful elements of

1 De Luca, 'Infrastructure Finance in Europe: Insights into the History of Water, Transport, and Telecommunications', 39–60.

2 Herzig, 'Die antiken Grundlagen des europäischen Straßensystems', 5–17.

3 Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 137: 'Carolingians pursued policies that were intended to sustain elements of the physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and canals [...] The early Carolingians also maintained the "ancient custom" (antiqua consuetudo) that the local authorities keep roads in good repair'; Bassett, 'Divide and Rule?', 53–85; Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth and Ninth Century England', 69–84; Stevenson, 'Trinoda Necessitas', 689–703.

4 Szabó, 'Antikes Erbe und karolingisch-ottonische Verkehrspolitik', 125–45.

5 Castree, Kitchin, and Rogers, eds., 'Infrastructure'.

6 In the Middle Ages those were as powerful, if not more so, than in any other epoch, see i.e.: Clemens, 'Römische Ruinen im Mittelalter. Archäologie und Geschichte', 123–42.

infrastructural Medieval networks has been underappreciated.[7] Usefulness needs not to be proportional to the state of maintenance. The way ruins could be brought into the realm of infrastructure could also go way beyond the simple use of spolia.[8]

Infrastructure does not necessarily have to be purely physical: 'Infrastructure is material (roads, pipes, sewers, and grids); it is social (institutions, economic systems, and media forms); and it is philosophical (intellectual trajectories: dreamt up by human ingenuity and nailed down in concrete forms).'[9] All those kinds of infrastructure can be found in Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain.[10] They can coexist and be seen to be on an equal footing.[11]

Still, the understanding of infrastructure as a dynamic but broadly stable network was only accidental in the Early Medieval period and problematizing infrastructure as a 'system' might not have been a widespread strategy. Nevertheless, such an understanding offers a useful and applicable point of departure for defining infrastructure in this book: As a set of networked or disjoined physical, social and philosophical resources that have been inherited from the past or created in the present. Infrastructure as a base for the functioning of a polity is already a feature in the Early Medieval context. Among its functions for the leaders of such polities we can definitely how see enabling and controlling mobility and exchange was of paramount importance. Those infrastructures, when activated, could become resources of governance.

7 Nevertheless some fascinating work in the British context is being done, like Eaton, *Plundering the Past*.

8 After all, it can be hypothesised that ruins are responsible for the whole idea of 'decline and fall' that seems to have haunted us since Gibbon. Their allure made the writers of the Enlightment become enamoured with the idea of catstrophic break, see Bowersock, 'The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome', 37.

9 Howe et al., 'Paradoxical Infrastructures', 549.

10 In fact, the definitions of what infrastructure is can be widely different depending on geography and topography. What can be seen as infrastructure in one region or polity might not be seen as one in another. Regions have infrastructures that correspond to their socio-economical and physical nature, see Edwards, 'Infrastructure and Modernity', 185–88.

11 Bede enumerates both symbolic and material infrastructures created by Benedict Biscop next to each other, treating them equally: '[V]enerable gift of relics of the blessed martyrs of Christ; now he was accompanied by architects for building the church, now by glass-makers both to decorate and to protect its windows, now by masters of singing and ministering in the church the year round; now he carried to us a letter of privilege from the Lord Pope to guard our liberty against all incursions from without; now pictures of sacred stories, to be put on display not only to ornament the church but to instruct those who looked upon them, so that those who could not learn of the works of our Lord and Saviour by reading could do so by looking at the images themselves.' Bede, *Homily on Benedict Biscop*, 40–41.

2. Governance Resource

The existence of governance, not to speak of its 'resources', has been put into question in the Early Medieval context.[12] The narratives of collapse have tended towards a gradual, or, as in the context of Britain, the Balkans or slightly later the Aegean, a rapid disappearance of governance as a *praxis*.[13] On the other hand, the work of scholars like Wendy Davies or Susan Oosthuizen, from both historical and archaeological perspectives, has shown intense management of small-scale landscapes.[14] Evidence from other areas of the Late Antique and Early Medieval West shows that at the least the management of landscape on a small to medium scale was a constant feature in the period between 400 and 900.[15] Although special in as much as they are a singular collection gathered under specific circumstances, the letters of Gregory the Great offer us a glimpse into how intensely managed and governed the late sixth century Mediterranean could be, with the tiniest minutiae of estate administration being discussed.[16] They also exemplify the role of the Church as a governance actor – without analysing that role and its interface with secular powers, the image of Early Medieval administration will be incomplete to the point of being false. Collections of charters provide us with similar evidence for Gaul, Britain, and the Rhineland. Even a cursory look into documentary evidence shows that the Late Antique and Early Medieval world was full of governance, but its scale and nature had undergone various transformations and adaptations.

What it meant to govern had changed immensely, but the need and means to do so had not simply disappeared.[17] The idea of a 'state' is extremely questionable in this period, hence the word 'polity' is better suited.[18] But even if those polities were a far cry from the Roman bureaucracy of yore, numerous strategies were employed in this transitionary period to administer, manage

12 On governance in situations of limited statehood and the accompanying problems, see Stollenwerk, 'Measuring Governance and Limited Statehood', 106–30.

13 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*; Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*.

14 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*; Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales*; Oosthuizen, 'Culture and Identity in the Early Medieval Fenland Landscape', 5–24.

15 Davies, *Small Worlds*; Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages*.

16 GPRE, I, I.

17 How much the 'infrastructure of government' had changed in comparison with Roman Britain is evident when looking at the survey of administrative methods employed by the Romans on the island: Black, *Cursus Publicus*; for a discussion of the transition problem see Wickham, 'The Other Transition', 3–36.

18 Davies, 'States and Non-States in the Celtic World', 155–70.

and govern.[19] It is important to remember that so-called 'areas of limited statehood' are not ungoverned spaces.[20] While attempts have been made to explain the governance of sub-Roman Britain in a coherent framework, admittedly with varying success,[21] inside the broader context of the Early Medieval West two factors stand out even more sharply: regionalisation and the role of the communities. Regionalisation is highly visible in the creation of post-Roman polities.[22] The role of communities is well visible in regions where due to specific geographic conditions more archaeological evidence is available.[23] Governance became more fluid, and perhaps more *ad hoc* in its performativity. This is why, in the absence of large-scale centralised frameworks (or in case of their limited effectiveness), the importance and speed (or scale) of transformation of governance resources increased. For instance, in the context of Southern Britain, 'there is no conclusive evidence of a hiatus in the exploitation of the landscape, rather indications of changes of scale and intensity'.[24] There are, in Britain alone, numerous sites that seem to confirm this process. A prime example would be West Heslerton in Yorkshire, continuously inhabited and managed from pre-Roman to Early Medieval times.[25]

Governance resource is therefore, from the perspective of third to eighth centuries, anything that can be used to facilitate the process of management and governance. Such resources can be material or immaterial, and their use can be practical or symbolic. They might include, but are not limited to, infrastructure, artefacts, coinage, administrative documents (especially charters), laws, but also traditions, memories or histories.

Why introduce such a category, especially in the Late Antique and Early Medieval context? One could make an argument that in this particular period it is easier and more practical for historians to trace governance resources than governance practices. The latter are rarely recorded and sometimes uncertain. The former tend to be easier to spot in the sources. The study of governance resources is therefore a study of the link between them and the practices they were supposed to facilitate, as well as trying to establish if they were *actually* used as such. The Roman road is definitely

19 Esders, 'Transformation antiker Staatlichkeit und Herausbildung kooperativer Governance-Strukturen im früheren Mittelalter', 207–58.

20 Risse, 'Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood', 699–703.

21 Dumville, 'The Idea of Government in Sub-Roman Britain', 177–216.

22 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*.

23 Oosthuizen, *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland*.

24 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 73.

25 Powlesland, Haughton, and Hanson, 'Excavations at Heslerton', 53–173.

a potential governance resource for an Early Medieval polity; but we need extensive evidence from charters, laws, narrative sources and archaeology to establish its state of maintenance, availability, and, most importantly, if it was actually used. Thus, the study of governance resources is also a study of the strategies of adaptation and activation.

It is not enough for a polity (or an organisation, e.g. the Church) to have at its disposal readily available governance resources. It must also have the means to tap into those resources, to facilitate the interface between them and the polity. Those means can be economic in nature, but can also require symbolic capital. Without such means the resources are all but useless. This is precisely the crux of the Early Medieval governance, which was essentially a process of negotiation between the available means, actors and resources. Such an interpretation could be criticised as too teleological, implying a high degree of sophistication where there is none. Such criticism would only be justified if instead of being a part of a model used to explain the way the polities were governed (or, if one is to be critical of the term, administered or managed) it would constitute some kind of philosophy of governance. It is no such thing.

In practice, elements of the landscape could be used as governance resources in many different ways. A Roman road could be a means of transport,[26] a track for transhumance,[27] and a delineator in a boundary clause of a charter. In all of its iterations, it constitutes a governance resource, with roughly decreasing means needed to activate it, depending on the state of maintenance; even a badly damaged or barely visible road can still be a useful boundary long after it is no longer a viable travel route.

More complicated cases can be noted – like the passing of the old Roman forts into the hands of the Church through deeds recorded in charters. Those resources in all probability were outside the scope of means available to the rulers of polities in Southern England alone.[28] Therefore, their passing over to the Church (that could and did make use of them) was one of the few ways in which rulers could make use of the remnants of Roman infrastructure – essentially exchanging a resource that they could not activate (former Roman infrastructure) into one they could (relationship and favour of the Church). This exchange allowed them simultaneously to

26 Cooper, 'The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Law of the Highway', 39–70.

27 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*.

28 Especially in the early stages of the conversion period, the resources of the kings might have been rather meagre and thus their ability to activate infrastructures was minimal, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 314–26, 339–51.

include those resources in their own governmental and economic structure. Forts turned into monasteries became major centres of trade and production as well as political centres of gravity, even sometimes on a European scale.

3. Continuity

Continuity is now a complicated term when talking about Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, a word that seems to mean different things to different people. The understanding of that term, ranging from totality to isolated examples, seems to underpin first and foremost the discussion about the transitions, or collapses, which followed the end of the Roman rule in the West.[29]

One of the main challenges is the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy, because there is no simple 'continuity' to speak about. As rightly criticised by Roskams from a Marxist perspective, urban continuity for example does not exist as a concept.[30] I would argue that instead there is negotiation – a process of re-evaluating the existing circumstances and adapting to them in order to further certain goals of the community. Instead of continuity there is a form of constant adaptation and a process of maintaining distinction.

In scholarly literature we regularly encounter a narrow understanding of continuity, which is a totalizing one. Continuity occurs solely in situations when there is a direct link, a direct thread that takes us from one phase to another. That totalizing definition gave rise to an interpretation in which the sub-Roman and early post-Roman occupation of Roman towns in Britain has been termed as 'life in towns' as opposed to 'town life',[31] because the new residents did not *continue* the Roman character of their urbanism.[32] But they continued many other aspects of existence (place, some functions, symbolic references). In other words, they continued to maintain the distinction of this space. We are now starting to see that Roman urbanism had gone through such profound changes during its existence that instead of a monolithic and unmoved system we instead need a model of constant change.[33]

29 Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750*; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*; Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire*; Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*; Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*.

30 Roskams, 'Urban Transition in Early Medieval Britain'.

31 Wacher, *The Towns of Roman Britain*, 411–22.

32 'Urbanism' is here understood as a term denoting urban life and urban characteristics.

33 Wallace-Hadrill, 'Response to Session Remembering and Forgetting the Ancient City, III: Urban Myths'.

The dichotomy of continuity/discontinuity requires us to enclose a historical period within a set of arbitrary parentheses and declare that we should assess the relationship of that period with the preceding one. For example, 'continuity' sometimes refers only to a continuity and discontinuity with Roman times, ignoring the internal continuities and discontinuities of the period 382-597-735 and giving little place to longer views that take pre-Roman periods into account.[34]

Discontinuity is even harder to prove than continuity – consciously ignoring the past, often a past which is not too distant, is an act of great significance. Paradoxically, in order to have continuity one needs a counterpoint in order to define a break; we need a 'Grenzsituation', a 'limit situation', that gives an experience different from the others.[35] For Karl Jaspers those were the extreme situations in life, like death or guilt or conflict. For historians, they can include the need for extreme events, on the basis of which we can define and assess the perceived continuity. For Britain in the Late Antique period, this moment has been artificially placed in 410, when in reality, nothing, or exceedingly little, happened in 410.[36] We stick to this date because we feel we need it to prove the continuity and discontinuity of historical processes.

Often archaeology and history see continuity in different places; that leads to a distorted picture of the past. One could go as far as to state that there is no continuity in a strict sense of the word, because we cannot prove it. There is a negotiation with the past, and a re-use: Of infrastructure, of law, of tradition. Ward-Perkins went so far as to state that 'the simple and reasonable question "Was there continuity of towns in the post-Roman period?" is normally an impossible one to answer straightforwardly', with the exceptions of the *total* breaks and abandonments, and even those need a very hefty evidence base indeed.[37] This narrow and rigid understanding of continuity makes us sometimes miss the moments of genuine connection of one group of people to another across time just because their hands did not touch or we did not witness the handshake. In this monograph, there will be more focus on maintaining distinction.

34 There are, of course, notable exceptions to this, like Rippon, Smart, and Pears, *The Fields of Britannia*.

35 Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, 220–73.

36 For reassessments of the importance of the date 410, see: Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire and the End of Roman Britain', 251–62; Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*; Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*; Cool, 'Which "Romans"; What "Home"? The Myth of the "end" of Roman Britain', 13–22.

37 Ward-Perkins, 'Urban Continuity?', 16.

While in the past one could point towards those scholars who preferred the term Late Antiquity as *the* useful description of the transitional period and positioned themselves on the continuity side of the spectrum, now this group seems to encompas many approaches to continuity and discontinuity.[38] Late Antiquity as a concept itself poses serious periodization questions, and thus the relationship with continuity changes.[39] The periodization in Early Middle Ages and Late Antiquity moves towards a supplementary methodological position – preference for one of those terms is no longer directly connected to a preference for continuity or discontinuity. It is also important to stress that both of those terms, especially in light of the events in the second decade of the twenty-first century, have also lost their political innocence (if they ever had it); recent political events have brought the period of the end of the Roman Empire into the political discussion of the current day.

One of the reasons why continuity poses such problems is the multitude of methodological differences. Attempts to explain such differences have been made on the basis of the nationality and profession of researchers themselves;[40] direction of inquiry;[41] semantics;[42] social status;[43] field of study;[44] and of course the area under scrutiny,[45] with the economic aspects taking a prominent role from the archaeological standpoint.[46] An interesting and recent perspective, from the point of view of the global Middle Ages, is to view the Late Antique/Early Medieval transition and the continuity problems that come with it in the broader context of world history, where the Western experience becomes in itself a regional one.[47]

Outside of the English-speaking world, different strategies of coping with the continuity problem have been developed. Ranging from finely-grained

38 Of course, Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* who stretched it as far back as 150 AD, but also: Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-600* and others.

39 Marcone, 'La Tarda Antichità e le sue periodizzazioni', 318–34; Cameron, 'The "Long" Late Antiquity: A Late Twentieth-Century Model', 165–92; Testa, *Late Antiquity in Contemporary Debate*; Sestan, 'Tardoantico e Altomedievale: difficoltà di una periodizzazione', 15–37.

40 Ward-Perkins, 'Continuitists, Catastrophists, and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy', 161.

41 Looking from a classical perspective tends to minimalize chances of seeing any continuity, e.g., Hammond, 'The Emergence of Mediaeval Towns', 1–33.

42 Is it 'fashion' or 'transition'? See, e.g., Reece, 'Models of Continuity', 231–36.

43 Schütte, 'Continuity Problems and Authority Structures in Cologne', 163–76.

44 Sarris, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in the Post-Roman Economy', 400–413.

45 Kazhdan and Cutler, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History', 429–78.

46 Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*.

47 Humphries, 'Late Antiquity and World History', 8–37.

periodization aimed at seeing continuity as a chronologically small-scale phenomenon[48] to framing the continuity/discontinuity debate inside functionality as a chief aspect[49] and stressing the role of the Church.[50] Further methodological solutions have been offered in the Italian-speaking world, on the basis of a critique of Henri Pirenne's thesis, by offering a differentiation between continuity ('continuità') and abidance ('permanenza').[51]

Richard Bradley produced one of the more interesting texts in this debate, reinterpreting the site of Yeavering in Northern England. His thesis essentially revolved around seeing continuity as a construct and a handy term used not to describe a continuous, uninterrupted occupation or use, but rather what was later termed as 'use of the Past' by the elites.[52] As much as seeing continuity as essentially an invention of historians and archaeologists is an extremely attractive prospect (with which I very much sympathise) we cannot see it as only confined to elites. Such a view might be especially dangerous, because it leads to continuity being a quality to be strived for. It alerts us to the problematic of perception and ideology.

But what Bradley rightly noticed is that the question of continuity is also very much connected with the concept of time, how it is perceived now and how it was perceived in the past. Broad understandings could lead to creations of continuities, especially in archaeological contexts.[53] Some narratives stressing its lack and emphasizing the break between the 'Roman' and 'Early Medieval' worlds (those terms are also relative at the point of interface) tend to marginalise the less glamorous realities of continuity, like for example the burdens of the old order (mainly tax). Breaks in continuities of finance and administration have been proven to bring respite and greater autonomy to small rural communities,[54] and a more egalitarian societal structure and healthier populace.[55] Administrative changes, placed on a spectrum, have been even seen in a positive light in the Eastern Mediterranean, showing that they actually contributed more to the continuity of administration between the late Roman and Byzantine periods than to a break.[56] Those

48 Długosz, 'Ramy Chronologiczne Transformacji Miast Północnoitalskich', 9–29.

49 Which has interesting and important consequences for heritage studies today, see Untermann, 'Kontinuität – Diskontinuität', 9–12.

50 Angenendt, 'Kirche als Träger der Kontinuität', 101–41.

51 Giardina, 'Tardoantico', 44; Look also: Giardina, 'Esplosione di Tardoantico', 157–80.

52 Bradley, 'Time Regained: The Creation of Continuity', 1–17.

53 Bradley, 'Time Regained: The Creation of Continuity', 2–5.

54 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 514–18.

55 Barbiera and Dalla-Zuanna, 'Population Dynamics in Italy in the Middle Ages', 371, 375.

56 For one of the most concise, detailed and argumentative study of that phenomenon see: Whittow, 'Ruling the Late Roman and Early Byzantine City', 3–29.

conditions can also be, to an extent, observed in the fifth-century Britain.[57] Strategies of adaptation were in that respect not undermining continuity but helping to preserve it.

In his discussion of the problem of continuity in the context of Northern Italy, Ward-Perkins has correctly identified charters as crucial sources for the debate, enabling a dialogue between archaeological and historical sources.[58] Yet, they are no *panacea* that would manage to close the 'continuity gap'.[59] It is impossible to assert a common, agreeable to all, definition of continuity in the Late Antique and Early Medieval context.

What is continuity then? Can we even define it now under the massive weight of scholarship among the forest of approaches? Should we abandon the term altogether? Functional continuity is especially elusive to prove.[60] At the same time, there is little doubt that there are, objectively, elements that *from our point of view* look like continuity at the Late Antique/Early Medieval interface. The Church in this period is possibly the most glaring example, as an institution that not only managed to exhibit continuity in its own structures but also fostered it outside of them.[61]

To complicate matters even more, political continuity in the Early Medieval period *had* often involved significant breaks. The notion of being 'heirs' to the legacy of the past is a major element of politics in the Late Antique and Early Medieval West, and Britain is no exception. Yorke has written that 'even before the seventh century Anglo-Saxon kings were not unaware that they had taken over parts of a former Roman province and were the heirs of Roman emperors'.[62] Removing the claim to 'continuity' from 'political heirs' might look neat in the narratives of catastrophic break and decline, but would certainly perplex their contemporaries. The notion of *Romanitas* as a structural part of continuity muddles the waters further. 'Roman-ness' was an act to be performed and such performance does not necessarily imply significant continuities.[63]

What it meant to be Roman in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods is also worth considering in this light. As noted by Walter Pohl,

57 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 242.

58 Ward-Perkins, 'Continuitists, Catastrophists, and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy', 174.

59 As anybody who has seen Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove* knows, closing the continuity debate gap will only lead to a creation of a post-continuity debate gap. It is impossible to win the continuity race.

60 Untermann, 'Kontinuität – Diskontinuität', 11.

61 Wood, *The Transformation of the Roman West*.

62 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 2004, 19.

63 Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, 98.

'Roman identity was more complex than its compelling cultural surface may suggest',[64] and it was possible to create new Roman identities even after the end (or, should we say, 'transformation') of the Roman Empire.[65] There existed 'Rome across Time and Space' throughout the Middle Ages.[66] The complicated nature of Roman identity, the ability to create new Roman identies for a time after the Western Empire stopped being a meaningful political factor, and the existence of a symbolic Rome all did not require direct continuity. Those factors could in themselves undergo significant adaptations.[67] These issues were not absent from late and post-Roman Britain as well, albeit more difficult to document.[68]

Then comes the notion of continuity as a necessary direct taking-over, as an unbroken chain. Few would accuse Diocletian's reforms of the late third century as lacking continuity with the Roman world from before the Crisis of the Third Century. The crisis brought significant transformation (sometimes, and in some regions, like Spain, so deep that despite regained prosperity it changed the character of the region profoundly), but those two 'worlds' are compared within one framework.[69] As Wolf Liebeshuetz has stated: 'Late Antiquity like every period of history involves transformation, as well as growth and decline. In fact none of these can happen without the others.'[70] A break, a slowdown or a pause is not necessarily a prerequisite for a lack of continuity, even though arguments have been made to the contrary.[71] In the context of Kent, scholars like Alan Everitt have proposed the concept of 'seminal places': focal places which can be recognised as having profound importance in successive periods from pre-Roman to Medieval.[72] Such places do not have to express direct, unbroken continuity, and yet are examples of continued importance throughout multiple epochs.

Almost as a compromise one could say that continuity is just re-use that is conscious of its past, a re-use with added historical agency. Many would object to such an understanding of continuity, wishing instead to limit it solely to

64 Pohl, 'Romanness: A Multiple Identity and Its Changes', 410.

65 Which Pohl nimbly explains by the German distinction between Römer and Romanen – a semantic difference between those of Roman ancestry and those with Roman identity which is impossible to directly translate, see: Pohl, 408.

66 Bolgia, McKitterick, and Osborne, eds., *Rome Across Time and Space*.

67 For a consideration of how far reaching and long lasting those transformations could have been, see: Pohl et al., *Transformations of Romanness, Early Medieval Regions and Identities*.

68 Henig, 'Remaining Roman in Britain AD 300-700', 13–23.

69 Blázquez, 'La crisis del siglo III en Hispania y Mauritania Tingitana', 5–37.

70 Liebeschuetz, 'Transformation and Decline', 477.

71 Hammer, *Town and Country in Early-Medieval Bavaria*, 13.

72 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, 259–301.

cases of unbroken passing-on, where we can 'witness the handshake'.[73] From a methodological point of view, we must remain dubious that such cases are even provable. Subjectivity in our assessment of continuity will always remain a major factor. An absolutely narrow understanding of continuity would methodologically cast it as irrelevant. The particular period we are analysing here has to consider a problematic source base: 'Occasionally the sources are precise [...] occasionally they allow us to see the exact cause for a literary strategy. Stringing these specific instances together scarcely adds up to anything more than a fragmentary narrative, and it is important to recognize this [...] Nevertheless, an analysis of the fall of the western empire and the creation of the successor states in Gaul is possible even when the limitations of the evidence are recognized, and indeed utilized.'[74]

There are undeniable continuities in post-Roman Britain, but their character is different from those in Italy, North Africa, or even Northern Gaul which is often compared to Britain. Those continuities, as in Liebeschuetz's analysis, involve significant adaptation – which is also a handy term for a Late Antique and Early Medieval atom: Growth and decline bundled together and assuming a different trajectory.[75]

Continuity remains therefore a term that describes better what we as scholars observe and less what the actual actors experienced. As argued already, distinction was probably much more important as a factor and distinction can make do with resources that are not sufficient for continuity.

4. Re-Use

As an activity and as a feature, re-use forms an inherent part of a biography of any structure or infrastructural system: 'The history of Anglo-Saxon structures and sites has always been marked by use and re-use, extending far beyond the close of the period [...] Sites and buildings, like poems, have an afterlife that is part of their history.'[76] The same can be said about Roman

73 An example of such thinking is provided by Dodie Brooks: 'The view will be taken here that intermittent use of a site is not enough, and that therefore any definition of continuity which, contrary to the general linguistic usage of the word, admits breaks is too weak.' Brooks, 'A Review of the Evidence for Continuity in British Towns in the 5th and 6th Centuries', 78.

74 Wood, 'Continuity or Calamity', 18.

75 In the Eastern part of the Empire these processes looked different and took a much longer time to come to fruition, see: Kennedy, 'From Polis to Madina'; Whittow, 'Ruling the Late Roman and Early Byzantine City'.

76 Howe, 'Introduction: Book and Land', 20.

structures, although their afterlife and therefore their pattern of moving in and out of use was different. Re-use has profound consequences on whether we actually know anything about the structure at all: 'Umnutzung konserviert [...] und so ist eine Typologie der Nutzungsmöglichkeiten zugleich eine Typologie der Überlebens-Chancen.'[77] Therefore, re-use is never neutral as an activity. It not only creates a new function or revives the old one but also profoundly changes the place of the object, the building, or the infrastructural phenomenon in history. It also serves an important role in preserving distinction.

Taking things over and activating them again stands at the core of the concept of re-use. It does not require a direct link, a handshake visible in the sources in which two communities pass an asset down a line; it limits the need to prove agency; it allows for a widely different purpose than originally intended; it can involve different practical forms including (but not limited to) the material and symbolical. Taking all this into consideration, re-use might seem to be part of an 'escape terminology' that allows the ciurcumvention of many problems presented by the term 'continuity'. It also presupposes some form of a break. In reality, it exists not as a replacement of continuity but next to it. It is just another of the strategies of adaptation and activation. It should also not be seen as monolithic – it could entail what Carver has called 'spasmodic periods of use' with gaps, pauses, discontinuities and 'nested' re-uses, essentially bringing back into practice previously re-used and then abandoned features.[78] Sometimes re-use involves nothing more than the reoccupation of a particular place. It is often difficult to see whether the reoccupation was intentional or not; an example for this is the Cheddar royal estate and minster, dated to the ninth and tenth centuries, and built on the site of a Roman villa.[79] Continental examples show that gaps could be quite substantial in time – like the case of Xanten – but nevertheless involving substantial ideological and practical capital being re-used.[80]

In its material sense, re-use has been methodologically connected first and foremost with archaeology. The Early Medieval period saw widespread connection not only with Roman but also with prehistoric monuments as burial sites.[81] Re-use can be blurry as a concept, for example is the widespread

77 'Re-use preserves [...] and therefore a typology of modes of use is at the same time a typology of chances of survival', Esch, *Wiederverwendung von Antike im Mittelalter*, 20.

78 Carver, Hills, and Scheschkewitz, eds., *Wasperton*, 114.

79 Blair, 'Palaces or Minsters?', 112–13.

80 Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, 203.

81 Williams, 'Ancient Landscapes and the Dead', 1–32.

clipping of coins in post-Roman Britain an example of re-use or continuous use?[82] Have the coins changed their purpose? If we would treat coins as singular objects they could have just remained in practical usage. If, on the other hand, we take coin economy as a service and therefore as part of infrastructure, coins were at least partially re-used, thereby gaining new identity and purpose. The same objects – the same coins – could have also meant different things to different people, retaining their practical identity as currency in some communities and losing it upon leaving them.

When it comes to symbolic re-uses, the situation becomes even more complicated. There is little doubt that the past played an important role in the Early Medieval world.[83] It could be moulded to serve a particular purpose and form part of complicated and multi-layered narratives. In fact, the use of past infrastructure as a focal point, be it prehistoric or Roman, seems to be one of the great 'symbolic' continuities of Britain.[84] As the example of Bede's conversion story shows, narratives created with the point of contact between material and symbolical re-use at its centre could form powerful tools.

Within the framework of this book re-use will retain all of those meanings. A stronger focus will be placed on the symbolic consequences of re-use and the material/immaterial interface. This can possibly be best exemplified by the role played by Roman roads in the charter boundary clauses. In selected cases they are repurposed as demarcation elements, but at the same time they can also still be maintained as transportation links whose state is recorded in the documents, retaining their original purpose. Their re-use inside the documents, through the vocabulary that describes them (be it Old English terminology derived from Latin or descriptions like 'to the emperor's street' – 'to kaseru strete'),[85] bears also a semblance of use of the Roman past. Thus, their mentions in charters form a multi-layered narrative of re-use.

As for the continuity problem inside the question of re-use it is, perhaps in a slightly unwieldy manner, expressed and reminded of by talking not of 'reuse' but of 're-use', of a process where we need to admit that in many cases we as scholars are unable to see the gap and its extent; a process which includes complicated frameworks of handing over and receiving, of reactivating the past.

82 Burnett, 'Clipped Siliquae and the End of Roman Britain', 163–68.

83 See: Hen and Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*.

84 Williams, 'Monuments and the Past in Early Anglo-Saxon England', 90–108.

85 Sean Miller, ed., *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, n. 31 (S877).

5. City

Gregory of Tours wrote: '[S]itum loci Divionensis, in quo maxime erat assiduus, huic inseram lectione. Est autem castrum firmissimis muris in media planitiae et satis iocunda conpositum, terras valde fertiles atque fecundas [...] Quattuor portae a quattuor plagis mundi sunt positae, totumque aedificium triginta tres torres exornant, murus vero illius de quadris lapidibus usque in viginti pedes desuper a minuto lapide aedificatum habetur, habens in altum pedes triginta, in lato pedes quindecim. **Qui cur non civitas dicta sit, ignoro** [MF].'[86] It is heartening to see that Gregory was no stranger to our problems: His bewilderment over the fact that Dijon is not called a civitas, even though it fulfils all the criteria he deems necessary, is telling.[87] What makes a town or a city?

The city, is, in the context of this epoch, a controversial and methodologically blurry phenomenon, and one that sometimes receives short shrift.[88] Actually in many ways it is easier not to speak of the city as such. We can follow Chris Wickham's departure from the strict usage of the term 'city' towards the term 'urban space' as one that is much more productive and allowing us to encompass a larger range of phenomena.[89] An urban space does not have to fulfil all the characteristics of a city. In essence, it is a term to describe spaces that cannot be described as cities or towns but in which a form of organised life exists that fulfils some conditions of urban life. To this it can be added that such transitional spaces can also be singled out by the possession of what modern urban studies term as 'peri-urban interface', i.e. a blurry zone of interaction between what is rural and what is non-rural, creating landscapes that show both rural and urban characteristics.

86 *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis. Libri Historiarum X*, bk. III.19: '[T]he site of Dijon [...] It is a stronghold with solid walls, built in the midst of a plain, a pleasant place, the lands rich and fruitful, so that when the fields are ploughed once the seed is sown and a great wealth of produce comes in due season. [...] The four gates face the four regions of the universe, and thirty-three towers adorn the whole structure, and the wall is thirty feet high and fifteen feet thick, built of squared stones up to twenty feet, and above of small stone. And why it is not called a city I do not know [transl. MF].'

87 Although we should also remember that Gregory could have been taking into consideration other factors. He might also have been wondering why Dijon was not a seat of a bishop (like Langres, the 'family seat' of Gregory's family was). Gregory's kin owned large estates in the vicinity of Dijon and Dijon served as the residence of his great grandfather, Gregory, Bishop of Langres. Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, 6–9; Murray, 'The Merovingian State and Administration in the Times of Gregory of Tours', 216.

88 As much as the origins of the High and Late Medieval city are often recognised, they are sometimes discussed in little detail, see: Hirschmann, *Die Stadt im Mittelalter*, 1–3.

89 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 592.

Nowadays employed mainly to research urban sprawl zones, it is useful as a concept for the Early Medieval period.[90]

Such an approach is especially relevant in the British context, where (as we shall see) there were no cities or towns in the classical sense of the word (i.e. in the understanding of Classical Antiquity) that we can confirm with certainty after the 430s.[91] The lack of an economic network necessary to sustain them precludes the possibility that they lasted for a substantial amount of time.[92] There were numerous para-urban spaces though, in some cases even new ones (established after the Roman withdrawal, like Whithorn in Scotland), and in them we should look for evidences of use and re-use. Re-use perceived not as sustained city life but as a certain form of 'damage control', preserving urban functions necessary in the context of here and now and carrying them on, always in flux and always adjusting to changing circumstances.

What do we actually perceive as 'urban'? For a historian of Early Medieval Europe, the precise definition of 'town' and 'city' and what it entails has profound consequences.[93] Over the years, various approaches have been attempted in order to tackle that problem, ranging from specific definitions to criteria-based approachs. Perhaps the crucial element is to avoid a teleological definition – taking one form of a city, either from the era preceeding the Early Middle Ages or succeeding it, and using it as an unmovable point of reference.[94] Seeing Early Medieval urban definitions in their own right and not bound to the concept of continuity will allow us to better apply them to what we could term historical reality.[95]

The criteria approach allows for a set of 'functions' that can be adapted to various circumstances of a particular town or city, brigning its individual characteristics to the fore.[96] As Carl Haase has put it, only a 'combined' con-

90 McGregor and Simon, *The Peri-Urban Interface*. One can consider the sometimes desolate and definitely not urban-like sprawls of modern cities like Los Angeles for thinking about how flexible the definition of a city can be and how blurry conceptually our idea of the city is in the present as well as in the past.

91 Problems of definition are not only the domain of the post-Roman and Early Medieval periods. Already in the 'classical' Roman times the definition of a town and its application to particular sites can be difficult, see: Brown, ed., *Roman Small Towns in Eastern England and Beyond*, 103–18.

92 Biddle, 'A City in Transition: 400-800', 21.

93 Goodson, Lester, and Symes, 'Introduction', 5–7.

94 Even though taking it as a point of reference might lead to interesting results, see Ennen, *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt*, 10.

95 Mayer, 'Zur Geschichte der Stadt im Frühmittelalter', 127.

96 Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*, 16.

cept of a city, arrived at by a sum of criteria, can express such individuality.[97] Nevertheless, this approach has been met with strong criticism in British scholarship – beginning with Susan Reynolds calling it 'one of the less useful concepts that has come to Britain from abroad'.[98] Her grounds to criticise the criteria approach were that it presupposes an intuitive understanding of the 'urban' category without actually discussing it, and that in light of the scarcity of evidence such bundles are useless.

Reynolds instead supplied a definition of a town as 'a permanent and concentrated human settlement in which a significant proportion of the population is engaged in non-agricultural occupations […]. The inhabitants of towns normally regard themselves, and are regarded by the inhabitants of predominantly rural settlements, as a different sort of people.'[99] That second part is crucial, as it focuses on differentiation as well as on our own perspective of the city inhabitants.[100] As pointed out by Hines in a discussion over Scull's assessment of urbanism in the pre-Viking period: 'A significant point here is the question of how far a town or an urban settlement or even urbanism is essentially a cognitive concept. Towns in a given culture may be what people see as being distinctive.'[101] Nevertheless this is sometimes not enough. Late Medieval phenomena like the *Reichsdörfer*, free villages, seen decisively as distinct from other communities and juridically 'free', are a case in point.[102]

These bundles of criteria might seem to be an excuse to precisely define what we mean when we say 'urban'. But this method can help us balance the 'ideal', almost platonic, definitions derived from Weberian tradition.[103] In general, the 'urban definitions' tend to oscillate between the legalistic and functional understanding of a town.[104] There is a tendency to tip towards a socio-economic understanding which is ultimately derived, on theoretical grounds, from the understanding laid down by Max Weber.[105]

97 Haase, 'Stadtbegriff und Stadtentstehungsschichten in Westfalen. Überlegungen zu einer Karte der Stadtentstehungsschichten', 22.

98 Reynolds, 'The Writing of Medieval Urban History in England', 49; see also Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain,* 5.

99 Reynolds, 'The Writing of Medieval Urban History in England', 49–50.

100 Modern urban studies show that inhabitants of cities percieve their habitat differently from outsiders, creating their own 'image of the city' with internal cartographies, see Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

101 Scull, 'Urban Centres in Pre-Viking England?', 308.

102 Kümin, 'Rural Autonomy and Popular Politics in Imperial Villages', 194–213.

103 Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Mittelalter, 1150-1550*, 48–50.

104 Scull, 'Urban Centres in Pre-Viking England?', 297.

105 Weber, 'Stadt', 513–600; for discussion see: Bruhns and Nippel, eds., *Max Weber und die Stadt im Kulturvergleich* and Klaus Schreiner, 'Legitimität, Autonomie, Rationalisierung', 161–211.

Such an understanding is visible for example in the review of definitions supplied by Richard Hodges.[106] As much as it is a valid form of approach, especially in periods when we have at our disposal data and evidence to apply such socio-economic definitions, it has been criticised in the past as omitting other important aspects of urbanism.[107] Eberhard Isenmann has commented on how we need to balance those 'idealised' definitions with the particular conditions in which the city we are trying to describe exists.[108] And even though the Weberian heritage tends to result in more functional definitions, it still poses a danger when applying it to the Early Middle Ages – it presupposes a distinct and rigid view of a city as a separate entity mostly defined by a 'Stadt als Einheit von Festung und Markt' dynamic.[109] There is just not enough flexibility, as Weber's definition also tends to follow a sequence of 'organisation stadiums' that presuppose a certain linear evolution and a degree of teleological thinking.[110] Towns, or urban space in general, have not always been seen as a mainly economic interface. Other functions, not least the symbolic ones, were often more important.[111] It is debatable if at any stage in the period covered in this book the economic character was actually the chief function of distinction – apart from *wics* that are a separate phenomenon. Somewhat in opposition to this view stands the 'argument in stone', coined by Martin Carver, in which urban space is seen more through the effect it has on the community and landscape.[112] This approach treats urban space more as an idea that influences its surroundings.[113]

106 Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 20–25.

107 Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas', 235. Interestingly, the description of Metz as an urban space transformed almost beyond recognition has been challenged, see: Bachrach, 'Fifth Century Metz', 363–81.

108 Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Spätmittelalter, 1250-1500*, 25.

109 Weber, 'Stadt', 520.

110 Breuer, 'Nichtlegitime Herrschaft', 70.

111 In the interpretation proposed by Fustel de Coulanges the ancient city (really to be understood as the pre-imperial city) was first and foremost a product of religion. It was the religious function that kept it together and influenced its political and municipial institutions. Fustel de Coulanges saw the death of the ancient religious system and the arrival of Christianity as defining factors leading to the end of the ancient city. One might wonder then, if the complete reinvention of that function in the city as a Christian space *per se* in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages was not one of the most fascinating transformations of the bonding material of the ancient city? Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*, 214–33; 523–31.

112 Carver, *Arguments in Stone*, 1–18.

113 This talk of systems and networks and influences resembles the 'behavioural' approach to urbanism, known from modern urban studies, see: de Vries, 'Studying Cities in Their Context', 196–97.

In 1976, Biddle was debating how many (between one to four) criteria must be fulfilled in order to consider a settlement to be of urban status.[114] Biddle himself had seen the drawbacks of that list, but in light of the archaeological and historiographical work done since, we can see that defining urbanism in the Early Medieval period in Britain on the basis of this list is missing the point. A liberal application of those criteria would populate even sixth-century Britain with quite a few towns. Essentially, just looking for criteria can make almost any settlement into a an 'urban' one. Halsall, on the other hand, has offerd a shorter list, concentrated on *differentiation*. By applying an approach in which we define the urban characteristics of the town in contrast with other settlements in the region, we can avoid falling into judging those sites on our own terms.[115]

Guy Halsall underlines his devotion to Carver's paradigm of 'arguments in stone' as opposed to Hodges' primarily economic definition.[116] Yet the two main points of his argument are at least partly economic in nature. Perhaps then, the difference between social and economic factors is not so clear-cut and, especially in the Early Medieval period, presents more of a blurred picture. Halsall's set of criteria is nevertheless more useful from a theoretical point of view because of its differentiation paradigm. He stresses that we should understand the city in the way its contemporaries understood it, and therefore by the distinction that it carried.

The problem this creates is that it is doubtful that there was a strong 'town definition' in the Early Medieval period in Britain. Settlements might be considered urban in character just depending on the perception of their inhabitants or external observers. That definition could also change – it is enough to look at how Bede is using the term *civitas*.[117] A number of entities which we would hardly calssify as 'cities' were linguistically marked as such in the Early Medieval period. Here Carver is closer to a meaningful explanation – by seeing the town as a form of an idea, giving more space to the *perception* and *distinction* of a city. The same space could be, moreover, regarded as urban or non-urban depending on the point in time and without a significant change of characteristic.

114 Biddle, 'Towns', 150, based on the work of the Urban Research Committee of the Council of British Archaeology, see: Heighway, ed., *The Erosion of History*, 9.

115 Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-Strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz', 236–37.

116 For a critique of the economic model behind Hodges' definitions, see: Astill, 'Archaeology, Economics and Early Medieval Europe', 215–31.

117 See the discussion on *civitas* terminology later on.

Hammer in his research on Early Medieval Bavaria has given his own list of criteria.[118] Interestingly, in terms of looking for the Roman past, he put a Roman predecessor and transportation access on the list. Hammer sees those criteria as important in light of the surviving Roman road network.[119] He also introduced the important concept of 'para-urban' zones taken from Paul Goldberger's speech at Berkeley, but with a slightly different meaning: Something 'which can accompany urbanism as a supplement rather than substitute, much like para-transit fills the gaps in the public transit network.'[120] Hammer's approach gives much more room and allows for the inclusion of many more pheonomena. Para-urbanism is, so to speak, endemic in the British context in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods.

The further we move from the Roman 'core' the more flexible the criteria become, even though they should, in essence, describe a similar phenomenon (a non-Roman or no longer Roman urban space).[121] For Ambrosiani, writing in the context of towns found in Sweden, a town can be 'any settlement with a densely populated and permanently occupied site and a specialized non-agrarian economy […] It should also have functions of a central place.'[122] Again, that would give us quite an extensive list in our context. How then to steer through this thicket of definitions?

One way is to accept a plethora of 'urbanities'. There is, at the beginning, a late Roman urbanism, surviving (one would argue for the sake of absolute historiographical and archaeological rigour) not long after the 430s. Here, to assess this urbanism, we can operate within the classic definitions of a Late Antique town and its transitions.[123] There is is then a 'suspended animation' urbanism, which would not be recognisable to a late Roman or for that matter even to a eleventh century inhabitant of England. This is a period of urban spaces, not of cities, essentially of Hammer's 'para-urbanism' – of zones fulfilling certain urban or administrative functions and serving (in some cases) a symbolic role. A prime example of that is Canterbury, where there is a substantial body of evidence for life *in town*, stretching from

118 Hammer, *Town and Country in Early-Medieval Bavaria*, 55.

119 Hammer, *Town and Country in Early-Medieval Bavaria,* 13.

120 Hammer, *Town and Country in Early-Medieval Bavaria*, 18.

121 Although in some cases, like in the Byzantine empire of the seventh century, the sources are so focused on the 'centre', i.e., Constantinople, that we virtually lack written source material to compare it to the 'periphery', see: Ostrogorsky, 'Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages', 45.

122 Ambrosiani, 'The Prehistory of Towns in Sweden', 63.

123 To what extent the processes traceable in other parts of the West could be applicable in the British context is, of course, debatable. See: Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 1–28, 369–99; Reece, 'The End of the City in Roman Britain', 136–44.

the sub-Roman period into the Early Medieval one, with perhaps a gap of one generation.[124] This is what Wacher has recognised as 'life in towns' as opposed to 'town life'.[125] This semantic distinction might lead us astray – it presupposes a definitive break with all urban functions apart from location. It should be emphasised that this did not have to be the case.[126] We are not looking for a city or a town in the classical sense, nor do we attempt to call something a city when it clearly is not. This redefinition derives from a need to categorise a phenomenon that while having an important impact on the polities and communities is no longer a city in the classical sense.

Was post-Roman Canterbury, or even the Canterbury of Aethelberht, a town in the Roman, infrastructural sense? Not at all. At the beginning, there is even little evidence of any infrastructural taking over. But this period did play a part in the transition into a different phase, in which the symbolic and practical capital of urban space gained much more value. This phase lends itself more to socio-economic definitions; they regain their functionality with an urban, for the lack of a better word, resurgence. Nevertheless, the third phase is also not homogenous and includes a variety of urban, para- and protourban phenomena. It comes after the ninth century, but benefits from the strategies of adaptation employed earlier. And all of this was largely possible thanks to maintaining distinction.

As urbanism is not characterised by linear progress, possibly a better understanding of the coexistence of those phenomena is evolution – multiple forms of the same species overlapping in existence. There are indications that apart from large centres like London, York or Lincoln, Britain did not experience large scale urbanisation (in the classical, city sense) until, effectively, the post-Conquest period. This phase is often seen in conjunction with the process of building *burghs* but it remains an open question to what extent they were actually 'urban'. In fact, Campbell has remarked that '[i]t may have been that in a sense some of the communities most resembling towns were major monasteries'.[127]

To navigate this, we need to get away from trying to perform a phenomenological analysis of urbanism in our period. The key to understanding what urbanism *was* and where to find it is to focus on both differentiation and functions. When we analyse the urban spaces of Early Medieval Britain

124 Brooks, 'The Case for Continuity in Fifth-Century Canterbury Re-Examined', 99–114.

125 Wacher, *The Towns of Roman Britain*, 411–22.

126 Cities and urban spaces went through a variety of 'afterlives' in Late Antique and Early Medieval West. See: Liebeschuetz, 'The End of Ancient City', 1–49; Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City*; Frere, 'The End of Towns in Roman Britain', 87–100.

127 Campbell, 'The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns', 141.

later on we will see that there is no doubt that they were *different* from their surroundings and that they had limited, but specific *functions*. In the case of urbanism we can see well that it is the distinction that mattered and not continuity. And in the cases where processes that we describe as continuity occurred, they were possible because of the maintenance of distinction. Paradoxically those spaces did not even need to be inhabited to perform some of those functions. What matters is their differential-functional unity which is tangential to their status as 'cities' seen from the teleological perspective of what a Medieval city would become. Those spaces were resources.

Governance resources – resources at the disposal of a polity or another controlling agent that can facilitate control, execution of authority and legitimisation of power – in other words can be beneficial in the process of governing the said polity or the area in question. Such a resource does not necessarily have to be used in its original purpose or in material form. Its symbolic power can be as powerful as its physical one.[128] As such, urban spaces can be an important part of what has been termed the 'landscape of governance'.[129] Now, it can be argued that there was not much 'governance' in Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain, but as discussed above any kind of managing the land and its resources, even low-level, would qualify as governance; we are rethinking the ideas of polity and governance in the Early Medieval context.[130]

A governance resource, like any resource, requires a certain amount of material wealth and political capital to tap into it. Therefore, exercising control over former Roman urban space and being able to reap the benefits of it does not have to mean the same thing. This dynamic influenced many of the processes described here. Therefore, we talk about 'cities' and 'towns' and 'urban spaces' here but, in line with escaping the dichotomies, which is a crucial topic of this book, we are not interested in how they perform when put into comparison with what came after them. We do look at what came before them, because we want to establish a point of departure, but do not value them according to it. This is a much more useful form of analysis of what 'a city' was in Early Medieval Britain.

128 A good example of a classic Medieval governance resource of this type is a relic. Their import and the cult of the saint in question, could be a powerful resource, see: Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990', 198.

129 Baker, Brookes, and Reynolds, 'Landscapes of Governance', 499–502.

130 Pohl, 'Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter', 9–38.

II. Movements: Charters and Roman Transport Infrastructure

1. Writing Roads Down: Roman Roads in Documentary Practice

There was a good chance that if you lived and died in post-Roman Britain south of Hadrian's Wall you were likely to be buried close to a Roman road. Roman trackways greatly influenced the man-made geography of the island. Not only settlements, but also a sizable number of cementaries were placed close to the Roman roads.[1] It is then only correct to start with the roads and the transport infrastructure they provided; the focus of this chapter is the study of roads, bridges, and milestones. And to learn more about what they meant for the societies of post-Roman Britain we will use something of an unusual source – charters. Charters provide interesting information about transport infrastructures, as those were also visible landscape elements, and easily used in boundary clauses. The estates themselves and the field system that came with them were also, to different degrees, heirs to the Roman infrastructure.[2] Those roads, even when not used for their primarily function, were the vascular system of Roman infrastructure in post-Roman Britain.

The reason why we can learn so much about roads from charters has little to do with the intent of their compilers. First of all, roads were one of the most visible elements of the Roman landscape left in Britain – they were, quite literally, everywhere. We now start to understand this inherited landscape in a different way – seen less through a perspective of destruction and break and more in terms of abidance and re-use.[3] The constant usability and need to maintain transport links throughout the country greatly influenced their potential for survival in the landscape. Early Medieval settlements often expanded along the major Roman roads, as we can see from both settlement patterns and coin finds.[4] A whole group of Old English place-names ending

1 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 50. A striking example of a practice that would be familiar to every Roman.

2 Even if they raise major issues of interpretation, see Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 160–61.

3 Rippon, 'Understanding the Medieval Landscape', 234.

4 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 99–103.

in '–ham' seems to be connected with this phenomenon.[5] This shows how much of a governance resource they were even to polities that could not fully tap onto their infrastructural potential. There are indications from archaeological records that Roman roads were crucial for the Early Medieval economy and exercise of power.[6] They were used to distribute iron and salt, and control over them was already seen as an important factor for settlement creation in the sixth century.[7]

Moreover, on a practical level, roads were simply handy tools for demarcation. In the classic formula of a boundary clause, if there was a Roman road in the vicinity it was easy to use it, and it often formed a natural border of an estate. Simple usefulness should never be underestimated. Ulpian's 'forma censualis' obliged the owner to declare precisely the borders of an estate for taxation purposes.[8] This practice stayed on in use in the medieval charter. And a road, especially a straight, paved Roman road, makes a lasting mark on the landscape, as anybody driving from London to Chester on the A5, which follows closely the Roman Watling Street, can confirm.

Roads, even those which are not properly maintained (economic resources needed for systematic, but not accidental, maintenance probably exceeded the abilities of 'Welsh' polities and possibly also most polities in the East of Britain before the advent of the ninth century) could be used for a long time after the breakdown of the post-Roman administration. Nevertheless, some degree of maintenance, especially in the crucial strategic areas, seems more than plausible and definitely took place in the vicinity of river

5 See, for summary: Ryan, 'Place-Names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape: An Introduction', 9. In the past this has been criticised on the basis that the Roman road network was so dense it seems unlikely for -ham place-names not to be connected with it somehow, see: Copley, *Archaeology and Place-Names in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, 2. However, thanks to the work of Margaret Gelling and Barrie Cox there can be little doubt that it is true, see: Gelling, 'English Place-Names Derived from the Compound Wīchām', 87–104; and Cox, 'Aspects of Place-Name Evidence for Early Medieval Settlement in England', esp. 36-38. Final confirmation that there exists at least a strong correlation between the -wicham place-names and the sites of Roman villas has been delivered by using statistical analysis of distance calculation by Keith Briggs, see: Briggs, 'The Distribution of Distance of Certain Place-Name Types to Roman Roads', 43–58.

6 It is worth remarking that Roman roads might have actually been useful economically in a mostly short-stretch economy. Long-distance transport by road was not exactly viable in Roman times. 'It was less costly to ship grain from one end of the Mediterranean to the other than to cart it 120 km', Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, 133.

7 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 130, 181.

8 *The Digest of Justinian*, 50.15.4. The boundary clause itself is a tradition of Roman law, see Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 52.

crossings, for example the Bridge of Rochester.[9] Under those circumstances it is not at all surprising that roads feature frequently and prominently in the charters. At the same time milestones are less frequent. In some cases milestones ceased to be road markers and gained new functions, sometimes administrative (for example denoting a meeting point) and sometimes religious. In such circumstances they would appear in charters under new names like Beorhtsige's Stone in a charter from 1062.[10] A little more can be said about those cases through inscription evidence.

Work with Early Medieval charters has expanded in recent years, and with an in-depth diplomatic study can bring great results.[11] Recently it has moved more and more into the complex analysis of whole sets of documents – creating an *Urkundenlandschaft* of a particular region or polity.[12] Wendy Davies already attempted to create such an *Urkundenlandschaft* for Wales in her work on Llandaff charters.[13] In this chapter we will try to pick from the forest of this 'charter landscape' information and hints about Roman infrastructure. But indirectly we will also learn about the relationship and adaptation of the Roman infrastructural past by Early Medieval societies.

As has already been noted, there is a tendency not to analyse post-Roman Britain as a whole that is rooted in a false interpretation of evidence, especially the archeological one.[14] But the charters' sets that we have today do differ. And so, our source set in this chapter can be divided vertically into two subsets, traditionally called 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Welsh' charters if only by taking into account the sometimes separate research traditions.[15] Those sets, although closely intertwined have important differences. They document life, economic practices, and social structures of societies existing in different geographical conditions, and in most cases are not chronologically contemporary. The manner in which the documents were handed down to

9 An example of such *longue durée* maintenance strategies involving various patterns of re-use in the case of Rochester has been discussed in depth in Brooks, 'Rochester Bridge, AD 43-1381'.

10 *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, IV, n. 831 (S1036), 'æt brixges stane'.

11 Jarrett, 'Introduction: Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters', 1–18.

12 Like in the case of work done on Rhetia: Erhart and Kleindinst, *Urkundenlandschaft Rätien*.

13 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*.

14 Harland, 'Rethinking Ethnicity'.

15 Naming conventions of these two sets of charters are very misleading. The hint of ethnic origins in both names is almost entirely wrong, as the presence of numerous British-sounding names in the 'Anglo-Saxon' charters attests. The witness-lists of both sets show the existence of diverse communities. While their geographical distribution is uneven, a much better term would be Eastern and Western charters in Britain. On why the term 'Anglo-Saxon' can be problematic, see Reynolds, 'What Do We Mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"?'.

us also differs. In such circumstances one must be wary when pointing out similarities and differences in the function played by Roman infrastructure in their content. The reason for those differences is the deep regionalisation of the Early Medieval World. Those two sets, having common legal roots, exemplify two sets of strategies of adaptation and activation in the post-Roman world. But at the same time, their differences are not due to ethnic factors. The divide between those two sets of charters was porous enough to make us immediately see that its roots have more to do with different ways of dealing with the legal tradition and external influences than with the ethnic character of their compilers.

The chief purpose of charters was to document changes in land ownership and, to a certain extent, the changes of privileges, often, but not necessarily, pertaining to land: Who gave what to whom and on what conditions.[16] Although often associated with grants to the Church, we also have charters being used in transactions between lay parties.[17] There is also an evolving conventionality to the institution of the charter, making them formulaic but vivacious documents. A section of the surviving corpus is falsified to support later claims. On the other hand, the surviving western charters came into being mostly as a form of support for claims to land put forward by the bishopric of Llandaff in the face of growing pressure from other ecclesiastical authorities as what was in essence highly a ideologically driven 'antiquary' endeavour.

As much as the charter evidence is indeed exciting and might prove to be of great help for archaeological excavations, it needs to be treated carefully. Charters are not some form of static, rigid administrative document, devoid of interpretation. They are living documents, possessing internal narrations, often amended, appended and adapted. Increasingly from the ninth century onwards they became elaborate literary documents, with complex agendas and structures, serving as much more than a dry record of transactions.[18]

It might be a truism to repeat, but we have to keep in mind that the compliers and the clients of the charters in no way had in mind any interest in documenting infrastructure that was left over from Roman times. It was also not their intention to preserve in detail the forms in which it was used or re-used. Nevertheless, when we look at the compilers and clients

16 For an introduction to the purpose and ritual of the charters see: Snook, *The Anglo-Saxon Chancery*, 66–69; Lapidge et al., eds., 'Charters and Writs', 102.

17 Davies, *Acts of Giving*, 139–63.

18 Snook, 'When Aldhelm Met the Vikings: Advanced Latinity in Ninth-Century Mercian Charters', 138.

of the charters in relation to Roman infrastructure, we must keep in mind one influential factor. They – the parties involved in drafting the charters and interested in them – noticed the remnants of the Roman past around them and chose to use it, re-use it and record that process in their charters, documents and chronicles. This was by no means an obvious choice. It stemmed from a need to make use of Roman infrastructure in the process of creation, management and expansion of their holdings and polities. That means that the presence of infrastructure in the charters is a result of practical activity and not an ideological programme.

David Bates asked recently: '[D]o we think about form, content, production and language in relation to purpose, audience and context as much as we should?'[19] The charters themselves, although essentially written texts and the products of a trained circle, might have also included elements of performance. In many circumstances they were read out at transactions, and that reading out was an important element of the nature of the document. The particularities of those oral practices are often lost to us.[20] Nevertheless important information can be derived from the performative aspect of the charters, as shown in the Continental example by Geoffrey Koziol, their verbal and visual 'semiotics' can be just as important as the administrative data they provide.[21] Also in Early Medieval England they can be seen as strong statements about power and authority, largely as a consequence of their performative character.[22]

How does this affect the study of Roman infrastructure in those sets? First of all, in the western charters some elements of the infrastructure that were visible and perhaps even in use at the time of compiling the original charter were either no longer used or had completely vanished by the time the charters were recompiled.[23] Taking into account that the compilation in the *Book of Llandaff* was supposed to support what was from the point of view of the compilators a present claim, we can easily imagine a situation when a reference to such non-existent or no-longer used landmark was omitted or modified to reflect a more current state

19 Bates, 'Charters and Historians of Britain and Ireland: Problems and Possibilities', 2.

20 The tradition of 'beating the bounds' in England migh be an example of performative action connected with the charters. On the Continent we have more information about act of the confirming the charter, involving placing the document on the altar, see: McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, 68–72; the crucial text for the English context, albeit touching mostly on a later period, is Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*.

21 Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas*, 17–62.

22 Insley, 'Rhetoric and Ritual in Late Anglo-Saxon Charters', 109–21.

23 Huws, 'The Making of Liber Landavensis', 133–66.

of affairs. Roman infrastructure was, as we learn not only from Britain, a surprisingly resilient one, but considered that over six hundred years had passed between the original charters referred to in the *Book of Llandaff* and the compilation of the *Book*, it is no wonder that some elements of it might have fallen into serious disuse.

Secondly, if we assume this reasoning to be of value and applicable to our situation, then we can also deduce a contrary phenomenon: Roman infrastructure that still existed at the time of compiling the *Book of Llandaff* had a significant influence on its text and the way it was written. As is the case in reasoning inside such a restrained and complicated set of sources, this cannot be seen as a universal principle. But keeping this process in mind might help us understand better the disparity in mentions of Roman infrastructure between the two sets of charters.

Thirdly, the 'Welsh' charters were created in a legal tradition that had a different evolution from the 'Anglo-Saxon' one.[24] Nevertheless all of those charters in their form had much more to do with the late Roman legal practice.[25] This difference, and, so to speak, the 'archaeological remnants' of the Roman law buried in it, plays a crucial role. Broadly, we can say that the use of a charter as a legal instrument in the Welsh context is an example of adaptation, while in the east of Britain it is more of an activation strategy. Again, because of the purpose behind the creation of the *Book of Llandaff* we cannot precisely say how many common elements were introduced at a later stage to strengthen the claim against the English ecclesiastical entrenchment.

The sets we are dealing with here are, by default, fragmentary both in time span (in the case of the 'Welsh' charters covering a selective period and, moreover, recompiled at a much later date) and in their geographical distribution. The 'Welsh' charters cover a particular zone connected with the see of Llandaff and the South-East of Wales in general.[26] The 'Anglo-Saxon' charters cover mostly Southern and Central England. Most of the Northern charters from beyond the Humber were lost due to violent events of Northern history, like the Scandinavian settlement, destruction of the Ripon minster by Eadred or Willam the Conqueror's harrying of the North.[27] The ecclesiastical archives were severly depleted even though we know through indirect evidence of Bede, among others, that they existed.[28]

24 Charles-Edwards and Bemmer, 'Irish and Welsh Law in the European Contexts', 1–11; Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*.

25 Davies, 'The Latin Charter-Tradition', 258–80.

26 Davies, 'The Latin Charter-Tradition', 260.

27 *Charters of Northern Houses*, esp. 4-6.

28 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 74.

Throughout this chapter we will work with documents created over a very long time-span, from the sixth to the eleventh century. What 'Roman' and 'Romanitas' meant throughout that period changed. This is why using the documents from the eleventh century to understand governance practices from the sixth is misguided. At the same time charters fossilise time. They provide a way to preserve what Reinhart Koselleck has called 'Futures Past'.[29] They revolutionise the approach to time and the perception of time by creating a relatively stable point of reference. While they evolved in their form they are still broadly comparable throughout that period. And while the methods of governance, the understanding of Romanitas, and the ways in which Roman infrastructure was used evolved, charters offer snapshots of that process. No other written source set offers us such a broad view into Roman transport infrastructures in Britain.

2. The Eastern Charters

2.1 Source Introduction

'Anglo-Saxon', or more correctly, eastern, charters as we know them today are a set of over 1500 documents royal, ecclesiastical, and lay grants as well as in some cases wills[30] and bequests.[31] Over 300 of them have survived in their original form, in so-called single sheets. The oldest ones on record date from the early 600s, but most of them have had at least some points raised about their authenticity. The earliest charters that are broadly accepted as not being forgeries date from the 670s and come from Kent, Surrey, and the then still fragmented kingdoms of the West Saxons.[32] Why there are no charters accepted as genuine before that date, and who introduced (or reintroduced) the form in England has been variously explained. Regarding the first question, it can be speculated that various chance events played

29 Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*.

30 Although vernacular wills constitute a small part of the corpus, just 68 documents, see: Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 11–12.

31 Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Charters: The Work of the Last Twenty Years'; Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*. It is worth also mentioning that several large databases of charters are available online, including the 'Electronic Sawyer' compiled by the Centre for Computing in the Humanities, the 'Kemble' project hosted by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge, and the, sadly already discontinued, 'Langscape' project by King's College London.

32 Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', 40.

a role (e.g., charters might have been lost during wars or accidental fires), or that before 670s papyrus, which does not survive well in the northern climate, was used to record the charters.[33] In terms of the second question, the most likely candidates are Augustine of Canterbury, Theodore, and Aethelberht of Kent,[34] with Wilfrid also being suggested.[35] Charters as a diplomatic practice on the Continent survived from the Late Roman period.[36] Such survival has been vigorously denied in the context of Britain, with the charter seen mostly as a form of 're-import' to England.[37]

Some but not all of the charters are concluded with or contain boundary clauses, which serve as a description of the land granted.[38] In the earliest documents these clauses are mostly in Latin, but in time an increasing number of them appear in Old English.[39] Vernacular boundary clauses are to be found also in documents serving a similar purpose on the Continent like the Würzburger Markbeschreibungen.[40] Indeed it has been hypothesised that monks from England may have introduced the use of vernacular in charter boundary clauses on the Continent, and specifically in the area of Fulda and Würzburg, in the eighth century.[41] A fascinating case of importing a particular form of adaptation of the Roman practice.

Using the boundary clauses gives us some insight into the distribution of Roman roads as an infrastructural resource. But in the light of the fragmentary nature of the data, its large timespan, and relatively wide statistical distribution, numerous caveats have to be employed. Maybe even a third of the charters are disputed – meaning we are not sure if they are

33 Dempsey, 'Legal Terminology in Anglo-Saxon England', 846.

34 Chaplais, 'Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Augustine', 526–42; Deanesley, 'The Court of Aethelbert of Kent', 101–14.

35 E. John, *Land Tenure in Early*, 1.

36 The classic study, orginally published in 1955, is Classen, *Kaiserreskript und Königsurkunde*. On methodological concerns and the problem of documentary continuity, see Nicolaj, 'Fratture e continuità nella documentazione fra tardo antico e alto medioevo.'

37 Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*; Classen, ed., 'Fortleben und Wandel Spätrömischen Urkundenwesens im Frühen Mittelalter', 28.

38 On the potetntial of boundary clauses for reconstructing the landscape see: Reed, 'Anglo-Saxon Charter Boundaries', 261–306.

39 Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', 46; for an overview of the raise of vernacular in Anglo-Saxon charters, especially from the ninth century onwards see Gallagher, 'The Vernacular in Anglo-Saxon Charters: Expansion and Innovation in Ninth-Century England', 205–35.

40 Bergmann, 'Pragmatische Voraussetzungen Althochdeutscher Texte: Die Grenzbeschreibungen', 62; *Die Zweite Würzburger Markbeschreibung*.

41 Bauer, *Die ältesten Grenzbeschreibungen in Bayern*, 273–74.

not forgeries.[42] How we establish if a charter is a forgery is actually rarely a straightforward process.[43] Nevertheless even forgeries might contain extremely useful information.[44] Forgeries first and foremost show us how their authors wanted their past to be perceived. When it comes to Roman infrastructure in the boundary clauses we are aided by a very practical consideration: If you fake your rights to a piece of land it makes very little sense to describe landscape features that do not exist. The power dynamics of a charter is based on being robust in face of a challenge. Also, not all forgeries were born equal. We tend to think about forging charters as a static event – in reality it was a process in which the past was processed for the needs of the present. Our perceptions of what constitutes a robust written record were not always the perceptions of Early Medieval scribes. What was paramount was the control over the memory of the past.[45]

2.2 Roads and Bridges in Boundary Clauses

The practice of using Roman roads in boundary clauses can tell us an great deal. We not only can learn about the positions of actual Roman roads in the landscape but also, perhaps more importantly, what this particular type of Roman infrastructure meant to the communities that had it, quite literally, in their backyard. By comparing the way they are described and used in these documents we can also trace many of the adaptations and distinctions that stand at the very heart of this book. It is important to highlight that many of the roads that we find in these clauses were multifunctional: Being a border marker did not have to mean that they were not used for transport or, for that matter, as a source of building material. Uses adapted. But the conscious terminology and usage devoted to these roads shows

42 Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', 40.

43 What even was a forgery and how was it understood in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages is terminologically difficult to express. Great insights into this dynamic are to be found in the work of Giovanna Nicolaj, especially Nicolaj, 'Exemplar. Ancora note di terminologia diplomatica in età tardoantica' and Nicolaj, 'Originale, authenticum, publicum. Una sciarada per il documento medievale'. As she points out, following Cencetti, 'authenticity' is not an absolute concept, especially at the turn between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

44 Sometimes scholarship was quick to dismiss charters as forgeries, because they did not conform to received knowledge. As the case of two charters connected with Wilfrid that use anno domini dating shows, this can make us dismiss perfectly feasible documents, see: Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and Two Charters Dated AD 676 and 680', 163–83.

45 As Patrick Geary has put it: 'For each institution then, the memory of its past was a key to its ability to meet the challenges of the present, and its loss of memory was its greatest danger.' Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 117.

that they were very often, if not in most cases, understood as marks of the much-changed Empire, slowly adapted from out of the world in which they were originally built.

Roads, especially Roman roads, were a handy tool for demarcation – they mostly ran straight and were paved, so at least in the early period were visible and easy to recognise. The border between the Hwicce and Wessex might have been contested along the lines of the Roman roads, as evidenced by spurious charters of Caedwalla.[46] Perhaps the most famous example of such usage is the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum from the second half of the ninth century, which explicitly cites Watling Street as part of a political boundary between the respective monarchs' spheres of influence.[47]

In many cases roads formed a natural boundary between estates or their most visible and recognizable element. The charters sometimes refer to certain tracks as 'maere weg' – the boundary road – implying that some tracks have served in this function for so long it became customary to call them such. Akeman Street – a Roman road running from London to Bath – has been known on one of its stretches as Mere Way, the boundary road.[48]

In the past, fragmentary studies linking the evidence in the charters with the Roman road network have already been attempted – for example the work of Grundy on the counties of Berkshire and Hampshire,[49] or Ward's work on Rochester land grants.[50] But it is worth revisiting the subject. Let us begin with some statistical analysis conducted on the body of charter texts.[51] There are over 400 unique charters in which roads or streets are mentioned, which makes them quite prevalent: more than a quarter of the surviving corpus mentions some form of a road. But the story of roads in charters is far from straightforward. Sometimes the same road will be referred in the same charter by different terms. Sometimes the trackway referred is no more than a path (and by all means, a 'path' can actually be a road). In the Old English clauses there is an array of terms for 'road' and 'street' (e.g., strata, streat, via), and their orthographical variations and

46 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 16. A great example of spurious charters giving us important information.

47 Liebermann, ed., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 126.

48 Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 257.

49 Grundy, 'The Evidence of Saxon Land Charters on the Ancient Road-System of Britain', 79–105.

50 Ward, 'A Note on the Mead Way, the Street and Doddinghyrnan in Rochester', 37–44.

51 The matter of editorial practice when it comes to 'Anglo-Saxon' charters is complicated. The best practice is the one recommended by *ASE* and Kemble project, which lists Sawyer number and the edition. When possible (i.e., when charters have been published in the new British Academy edition) I shall use the newest publications.

iterations as well as the known Old English post-Roman names of roads like Fosse Way, Ermine Street, Icknield Way and so on. To that we should add at least two instances (S142 as 'mila stane' and S621 as 'mil gemete'), and possibly two more (S1036 and S1215), where we can tentatively assume that a Roman milestone is being referred to either in its original form or in a re-used context.

In a number of instances, it is possible to establish the Roman origins of the road mentioned either by cross-referencing with the network known from the archaeological record or written sources by the name by which they are identified (e.g., Fosse Way). There are, however, a number of problematic cases. Often, where it is impossible to cross-reference a road from the charters with a known Roman road, the reason for it is linguistic confusion. One example of such linguistic confusion is linked to the Old English word 'dic' meaning dyke or ditch, but also referring to a road, sometimes a Roman road built on an 'agger' – an embankment elevated above the soil level.[52] An example of a road built on such an embankment, with peculiarly large proportions reaching 40 ft, is the Ackling Dyke leading to Bradbury Rings in Wiltshire, an important Roman site.[53] Secondly, there is the problem of the Old English word 'straet'. Under normal circumstances, it is used to denote a paved road, almost always Roman.[54] It comes from Latin 'strata via' – paved way, and it is later also used occasionally to describe roads built during the Early Medieval period.[55] Also, at the same time it can be used to describe roads that predate Roman times – prehistoric tracks crisscrossing Britain, sometimes involving a remarkable level of engineering. A good example is the Icknield Way, although its status as a coherent prehistoric transport route has recently been challenged (mainly on the grounds of reassessing the nature of prehistoric goods exchange).[56] Since those prehistoric tracks were in part used and maintained by the Romans, that designation still has a lot of value to us and is an important comment on the nature of 'continuity'. A number of 'straet-tuns' settlements lying next to a Roman road are known – e.g., Stretton Grandison in Herefordshire and Stretton Bridge in Staffordshire.[57] Those settlements show the importance of roads as governance resources.

The caveats, though important, should not overshadow the fact that in the vast majority of cases where a road is referred to as 'street', without

52 Darvill, 'agger'; Cole, 'Place-Names as Travellers' Landmarks', 53.

53 Otter, *Southern England*, 140–41.

54 Brooks, 'A New Charter of King Edgar', 235; Cole, 'Place-Names as Travellers' Landmarks', 52.

55 Vatts, 'Street'.

56 Harrison, 'The Icknield Way: Some Queries', 5–7.

57 Cole, 'Place-Names as Travellers' Landmarks', 58.

any other qualifying adjective, when cross-checked with the Roman road network we find that the scribe referred to a Roman road or a road used in Roman times.

Thirdly, usually 'via publica' refers to a Roman road.[58] But with time, the instances of the usage of the term 'via publica' and 'strata publica' drop and in the tenth century there are only two charters mentioning them.[59] In reverse, the Latin term 'via publica' has been translated as just 'weg' in the early Old English New Testament translations.[60] There might be a connection with the semantic evolution, in which in the ninth century it can also be used as a Latin translation of 'herepath' or 'hereweg', a military road built as a part of defence system between the burghs or just a secondary road of lesser significance.[61] Those Old English terms in turn can later mean any 'via publica', maintained at the king's expense – similarly to the evolution of the German term 'Heerweg' as pointed out by Georg Landau already in the nineteenth century.[62] The concept but not the name of 'via publica' might be hiding in plain sight: The laws of Ine (undated and usually appendend to the laws of Alfred, but stemming from the earlier part of of Ine's reign) seem to distinguish a highway as a place of safe travel and conduct, singling out those who do not follow the main routes and do not announce themselves properly as possible thieves.[63] This is an excellent example how the understanding and the practical application of Roman legal terms evolved throughout Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Britian.

One important window into how the inhabitants of Early Medieval Britain themselves understood their vocabulary connected with roads, streets, and tracks can be supplied by the glosses from the (now split) manuscript of Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus 16.2, and London, British Library, Additional 32246. The manuscripts contain excerpts from Donatus' *Ars maior* and Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*. Students in the late tenth or early eleventh century heavily glossed this compilation, giving us a great resource for the kind of terms used for infrastructural remains.[64] Recently re-edited, the glosses contain a number of references to roads, confirming much information found in the charters, including the usage of the word

58 On the concepts of via privata and via publica in the Roman law, see: Frühinsfeld, *Das Verhältnis von via publica und via privata*.

59 Cooper, 'The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Law of the Highway', 60.

60 Cooper, 'The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Law of the Highway', 63.

61 Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 269.

62 Landau, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der alten Heer- und Handelsstraßen in Deutschland*.

63 *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 98-99.

64 Porter, 'On the Antwerp-London Glossaries', 170–92.

'straet', and a degree of hierarchy in the tracks (e.g., differentiating terms like 'private road', 'tuunweg', known also from the charters).[65] The glossaries also list a 'strata delapidata' as 'geworht stræt' – meaning a paved, made road.[66] Why is the evidence from the glossary interesting here? First of all, the term is attached to a word describing roads that are overwhelmingly Roman. Second, this points out that at the time such distinction was alive and functioning outside documents such as charters. Technical terms, especially when they pertain to objects or elements that are rarely to be found in literature, are difficult to attest, and it is even more difficult to assess how widespread they were. The need to gloss 'strata delapidata' points towards the conclusion that even though it might have not been an easy term, it was still considered important.[67]

There is a reason to believe that at least in some cases when roads were used for demarcation, the land in question constituted a continuous whole from Roman times. Researchers such as Goodier have fiercely contested such views.[68] Goodier's argument is based strictly on burial distribution, taking few if any other factors into account.[69] And even such a 'burialist' stance has been successfully challenged by looking past the purely statistical distribution and analysing in-depth the continuities in burial practice, and putting the distribution of early 'Anglo-Saxon' burials in the context of the social and political changes of the fifth century.[70] Moreover, burial distribution is guided mainly by access to the most important resources *within* an estate and within a larger habitat, like food, water and shelter and transport infrastructure.[71] We of course have to use the burial data but we have to be careful not to 'fetishize' it. The key problem here is losing sight of small-scale adaptations. While large-scale statistics will help us pick up trends significant for the whole island, we need to also look at

65 *The Antwerp-London Glossaries*, 85. We have an example of such term in the S488 from 943.

66 Porter, 'On the Antwerp-London Glossaries', 85. A few lines above a similar term is attached to the Latin word 'agger', which might indicate the connexion with elevated earthwork as former roads.

67 The need to annotate does not have to mean a necessity – the practice of Medieval annotating went well beyond simple explanation. On the varieties of such practices see Teeuwen and van Renswoude, eds., *The Annotated Book in the Early Middle Ages: Practices of Reading and Writing*.

68 Goodier, 'The Formation of Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon England', 1–21.

69 Which has a long tradition and with the lack of other evidence is, sometimes, impossible to avoid. The first modern study to make it a central methodological base was the influential Leeds, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*.

70 O'Brian, 'Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England', 193.

71 Higham and Ryan, *The Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, 74–75; Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 201; Brookes, 'Walking with Anglo-Saxons', 145-146.

individual small worlds and the way they dealt with the Roman governance resources. Again, I will postulate, that diverging from, for example, Roman estate continuity cannot be seen as a sure marker of decline and break. Those local processes represent various strategies of adaptation, in which maintaining boundary distinction was not always the most cost effective or pracitcal of ways.

A number of case studies can help us illuminate those local processes of adaptation of Roman infrastructures through charters. Let us start in Rochester – the site of the bridge which Brooks so convincingly interpreted as being maintained and rebuilt following Roman example.[72] Here we benefit from the fact that we have four subsequent charters spanning a period of over 200 years, all mentioning the same network of streets and roads.

Of the charters connected with Rochester, four give details of the street network inside the city. The earliest charter on record, S1 from 604, granting the land where the Rochester cathedral now stands, corresponds exactly with the south-western quarter of the Roman city. The charter's authenticity has repeatedly been put in to question, but Brooks argued for an authentic basis, later corrupted.[73] His argument hinges precisely on the irregular features that prompted the suspicions of other scholars.[74] There is little doubt that S1 is heavily corrupted, but Brooks' arguments are convincing. The irregularities do point towards an authentic basis for the document. In the text, we find the stretch of Roman Watling Street going through the city of Rochester from north to south (and which closely follows the *cardo* of the ancient *Durobrivae*) used as the demarcation for the land granted by King Aethelberht to St Andrew and his church in the city. Throughout later charters, it keeps being called 'the street'.[75] In this text and in the further grants to the cathedral from the ninth century, the east-west street, the *decumanus*, is also mentioned and this street acquired the name 'Mead Way'.[76]

This set of mentions between 604 (if we accept Brooks' argument about early authentic sources of S1) or (if we are not convinced) between the eighth century and 868 tell us about the Rochester road system broadly respected the Roman matrix. We know from archaeological excavations that some sections of the Mead Way soon deflected from their staight line, but this is an

72 Brooks, 'Rochester Bridge, AD 43-1381', 12-15.

73 Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 59–60; Campbell, ed., *Charters of Rochester*, xv; Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, 223–25.

74 Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Charters: The Work of the Last Twenty Years', 217.

75 *Charters of Rochester*, no. 11, (S266).

76 *Charters of Rochester*, no 26, S339; this itself is interesting – the *decumanus* runs parallel to the river Meadway.

insignificant feature change, probably dictated by the cathedral building.[77] If we analyse the plan of the city used in the charters to distribute land and the evidence of continued maintenance of the bridge in Rochester, the internal distribution of the road network seems surprisingly stable. Interestingly, the boundary of the diocese of Rochester respects the Roman road as well.[78] This paints us a picture of a micro-*Urkundenlandschaft* in which Roman roads formed an important part of post-Roman adaptation strategies. The references to the Roman matrix of streets inside the walls might have also had to do with maintaining the distinction of that space.

Similar strategies can be seen outside of the urban space and in much later periods, like in charters S588 and S1574 from 956, mentioning the salt street running through the estate of Wormleighton in Warwickshire. Charter S1574 is probably an extended version of the bounds of S588.[79] The authenticity of the S588 has been generally accepted.[80] The text refers to the road as 'salt street' – a term that we find in other parts of England but is here of particular interest to us. In all probability, the charters refer to the old Roman 'salt street' linking the saltworks in Droitwich with London. This is an example of a possible continuation of the Roman toll practices.[81] At the same time this fairly late case highlights a process in which an important set of governance resources (salt production and salt roads) led to an adaptation process that maintained an astonishing level of distinction observable as late as the tenth century.

The importance of salt as a resource is visible in the economy of Britain throughout the larger part of the first millennium. Droitwich, known to the Romans as *Salinae*, was a major salt producing centre in Roman times. Production continued in the sub-Roman period on a substantial scale.[82] The royal monopoly there had been taken over from earlier Roman arrangements and continued into the period of Mercian rule.[83] Maddicott has made a case for an intricate economic and social relationship between Droitwich and London (more than 180 km apart) in Early Medieval times and the possible continued toll-raising connected to the salt trade.[84] Examples

77 *Rochester. Archaeological Assessment Document*, 97.

78 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 64.

79 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, 2, 71A (S1574).

80 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, 2, 71 (S588); Hooke, *Warwickshire Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds*, 57–61; Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands*, fig. 53.

81 Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England*, 223–25.

82 Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, c. 650–750', 27.

83 Brooks, *Church, State and Access to Resources in Early Anglo-Saxon England*.

84 Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, c. 650–750: Trade, Industry and the Rise of Mercia'.

of such transformations of salt-production sites are also known from the Continent.[85] The survival of long-distance economic distribution into the fifth century is not to be dismissed, and nor was it unprecedented, as the story of the production and distribution of pottery, like the Black Bunrished ware, shows.[86]

In his analysis of salt trade and production, Maddicott does not mention Wormleighton, located some 45 miles west of Droitwich, while there is interesting charter evidence for it. The road mentioned in the charter S588 goes from Droitwich through Stratford-upon-Avon further east, into Nottinghamshire.[87] I would suggest that the toll-levying mentioned by Maddicott did not confine itself to Droitwich and London but extended to all locations under Mercian rule where 'salt streets' led. Following Brooks we see this direct inheritance of Roman taxation practice, carried into sub-Roman polities and taken over by the Mercians.[88] Therefore, the maintenance of 'salt streets' or at least their continuous usage remains a vivid example of continuous activation of a formerly Roman governance resource. As the Wormleighton example shows, salt streets were preserved in a decent state up to the middle of the tenth century – meaning they were visible and there was at least a memory of them being used to transport salt.[89] Most likely though, they were still used for their original purpose. There are salt streets to be found in Eventide, Broadway, Wolverton, Bredicot, and Bisceopesdun, and all over Warwickshire.[90] There is also charter S1361 from Warwickshire, which descries an estate lying on the salt street from Droitwich to Evesham, *and* a 'straet' from Worcester to Alcester.[91] Salt industry was also crucial for Cheshire – there were numerous production centres there (Nantwich, Middlewich and Northwich) as well as saltways.[92] Those saltways were most

85 For an excellent example of a microhistory of such a salt-producing place from the Roman to the Early Medieval period see: Herz et al., eds., 'Die Saline Bad Reichenhall', 151–70.

86 Gerrard, 'How Late Is Late? Black Burnished Ware and the Fifth Century'.

87 Hooke, *Warwickshire Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds*, 60.

88 We tend to have a rather limited vision of tax, which is rooted in the misleading assumption of the prevalence of the capitalist economic model in pre-modern Western Europe. In this vision a tax is a monetized levy gathered by a centralized bureaucratic state and used for covering public expenses. While it might have been true for certain periods and areas of the Roman Empire neither was tax collected exclusively in coin and nor was it always collected in order to cover public expenses. The continued ability to gather such a tax is oftentimes used to mark a polity as 'still Roman' and its lack portents the inevitable arrival of the dreaded Middle Ages. Even though we *know* this not to be true, our arguments are often rooted in this fallacy.

89 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 125.

90 Napier and Stevenson, *Anecdota Oxoniensia. The Crawford Collection*, 115.

91 Hooke, *Worcestershire Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds*, 315.

92 Sawyer, *The Wealth of Anglo-Saxon England*, 45.

probably ancient as well, but their orientation was different – they were directed towards Wales and the Pennines. This difference in orientation shows how even on a relatively small geographical scale different regional solutions applied. It is a great example of why we need to look at Britain as a whole – only then will we notice local adaptation strategies of the various Roman practices.

The Roman roads of Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire were in the kingdom of the Hwicce, which might have originated as a British sub-Roman polity.[93] It is possible that the rulers of the Hwicce inherited the Roman monopoly and the Roman saltways in the region. The missing link in that inheritance might be supplied in the continued production and distribution of the Black Burnished ware up into the middle of the fifth century. This type of pottery has been connected with the distribution of salt for the Roman army.[94] The inheritance of the military logistic connected with this distribution by the rulers of the Hwicce is not to be excluded. Those rulers start having English-sounding names by the end of the seventh century. But in light of the similar strategies of activation and adaptation, whose echo we see in the tenth century charters, there is no proof of an actual change in administration, apart form the very much disputed, West Saxon occupation between the battle of Dyrham in 577 and the battle of Fethanleag in *c.* 584 for which there is little if any hard evidence. There is a linguistic change, which might in itself be a strategy of adaptation, but the actual governance resources underlying the polity express astonishing stability. In light of the work of Maddicott and Brooks, I see the salt-ways as a system that inherited not only the physical infrastructure of the roads but also their maintenance and taxation, on the basis of the economic importance of that infrastructure as a governance resource for the rulers of Hwicce and, later, Mercia. The orientation of the other saltways towards Wales and the Pennines shows that a similar re-use of resources was also present on the North-South line.

We need also to mention bridges, because they are such an important element of Roman infrastructure and also, for authors like Bede, seem to be significant not only as infrastructural resources but also as signs of *Romanitas*. Roman bridges were numerous in Britain but their deterioration was faster than roads, especially in the case of timber structures.[95] Bede

93 Coates, 'The Name of the Hwicce: A Discussion', 56.

94 Gerrard, 'Feeding the Army from Dorset: Pottery, Salt and the Roman State'.

95 Harrison, 'Change: 400–1250', 31–32. While the timber bridges might have fallen into disrepair faster they were also easier to maintain.

mentions a set of Roman bridges that survived in maintainable state to his day.[96] They have been interpreted as the bridges at Corbridge, Piercebridge, Newcastle, and Rochester.[97] Again, we have plenty to regret that northern charters have not survived in large numbers from early periods. Due to an abundance of military routes, there was probably a larger number of bridges present and they might have survived longer.[98]

Nevertheless, there is a number of preserved mentions of bridges. Charter S108 is a complicated example as its authenticity has been questioned.[99] In an old (1947), but currently still accepted translation, Eric Barker puts 'stratt brycge' as 'road bridge'.[100] There is evidence of Roman iron production in the area.[101] And the bridge might have been on a track that had to span a small stream, which was connected to this industry. S546 pertains to Reculver, a site built inside a Roman fort with a large amount of stone material reused for the building of the minster. Seen as authentic, the charter has been dated to the second third of the tenth century.[102] There is a Roman road in this charter ('streat'), possibly the one that originally led to the fort and a stone bridge on it.[103] Reculver was a major settlement both in the Roman times and the Early Medieval period. In the latter period, it could have been a toll station, and the estate was of large proportions.[104] The stone bridge and the road in the charter might refer to the road from Canterbury to Reculver. The bridge and the road were Roman, and they could have been in good state of maintenance at the time of the writing of the charter. It makes much sense to have kept them well maintained, and the estate of Reculver commanded resources to enact it.

Finally, there is S500, which must be a cherished example indeed. The charter is deemed authentic.[105] P.J. Williams had already picked up the Roman character of the bridge mentioned in the document at the time that Grundy was publishing the Berkshire charters.[106] It is the only occurrence

96 HE, I.11.

97 Harrison, 'Change: 400–1250', 33.

98 Dymond, 'Roman Bridges on Dere Street, County Durham, with a General Appendix on the Evidence For Bridges in Roman Britain', 148.

99 *The Charters of Selsey*, 109 (S108); Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 261.

100 Barker, 'Sussex Anglo-Saxon Charters, I', 94.

101 Cleere and Crossley, *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, 288.

102 Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script', 146.

103 Fleming, 'Christ Church Canterbury's Anglo-Norman Cartulary', 133.

104 Kelly, 'Reculver Minster and Its Early Charters', 67–82.

105 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, I, 39 (S500).

106 Williams, 'Roman Roads of Berkshire', 231.

of the phrase 'weala brucge', 'foreigners' bridge', that we can find in the existing charters.[107] There is a small cluster of weala- names in the vicinity.[108] The 'foreigners' bridge' stood close to the modern Quaking Bridge over the river Enborne, and remnants were apparently still visible in 1925.[109] There were, in all probability, more bridges of such denomination, but what is important is the kind of relationship between the inhabitants and the infrastructure that emerges from using such a name.[110] Either the superior workmanship, or the vivid connection with the past of the bridge lent the crossing such a name. While explaining such remnants of infrastructural/linguistic interface as evidence of Romano-British enclaves is valid, it seems that what the charter reflects here has more to do with the memory of who built the bridge. Terms for infrastructure also matter. Another meaningful explanation, considering that the bridge was clearly serviceable for a longer period, is that the name preserves the memory of who was responsible for its maintenance – in this case a community considered 'British' by the surrounding inhabitants. Becaue of how dififcult to interpret terms like weala were (not only in Britain but also in the whole of the post-Roman West) what exactly such a denomination tells us about this community appart from a degree of differentiation, is perhaps impossible to tell.[111]

A bridge is a resource which, depending on the topography of the region, is difficult to replace by a low-cost alternative. A ford was not always available in the vicinity and bridges seem to have been of continued importance. Bridges made out of stone must have also been important statements, perhaps even on a supraregional level. We might never now if they were implicitly connected with the Roman past, but it seems very likely.

2.3 State of Maintenance

Bede, describing the miracles of Bishop John (of Beverley), includes an interesting description recounted to him by Herebald: '[C]ontigit die quadam nos iter agentes cum illo deuenisse in uiam planam et amplam, aptamque

107 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, I, 39.

108 Christie et al., *Transforming Townscapes: From Burh to Borough*, 129.

109 Williams, 'Roman Roads of Berkshire'.

110 The terms weala and wealh were not stable, and their meaning changed throughout the course of the Early Medieval period. Because the S500 is relatively late and the term appears in a compound, the interpretation of 'weala brucge' as 'foreigners' bridge' seems more likely. See: Faull, 'The Semantic Development of Old English Wealh'.

111 For a discussion of this problem see: Pohl, Hartl and Haubrichs, eds., *Walchen, Romani und Latini*.

cursui equorum' ('one day as I was travelling with him, we happened upon a road straight and broad, perfect for horse races').[112] Of course there is a race, and of course the bishop miraculously saves the poor Herebald, who narrates the story, from certain death in an accident, as you do if you are a miracle-producing bishop. What should interest us more is the road, the 'uiam planam et amplam'. The road certainly does look much like a stretch of a particularly long and broad Roman road, which was in a state good enough for it to be suitable for a race.[113] This episode, if it indeed refers to a Roman road, shows that even though it could have been used for transport, its state was not ideal – in other words, the standards of what a 'usable' road was might have been relatively low in Early Medieval England. What can charters tell us about this?

An argument can be made that the roads and tracks mentioned in the charters did not necessarily have to be in use or in any serviceable state of maintenance.[114] Vince has even written that '[t]here is little that can be done to prove that a Roman road was being used in the seventh to ninth centuries. The fact that additions were made to the Roman system does, however, suggest they were being used.'[115] Boundary clauses do not chiefly focus on the usage of roads and tracks, but instead mostly treat them as landmarks in the landscape. Therefore, a mention in a charter is not enough to build up an argument pertaining to a state of usage, not to mention elements like the existence of usable pavement or ability to sustain traffic. That would be a valid point, but my hypothesis is, at least partially, different.

The charters point out disused roads or those that might be found in a state of high disrepair. A good, if late, example is charter S459 from 940 describing a 'broken/dilapidated road' – 'brokene strate' running through the area of Liddington in Wiltshire:

> Þis sand þe land imare to Lidentune. Arest of Dorcyn on ða to brokene strate, anlang strate on Lyden, up anlang Liden on þe estre Lyde cumb, […] þanen ut ðurth ðone ordceard, of þane ordcearde on þare oðere herepað,

112 HE V.6.

113 The passage remains ambiguous – the description of the accident seems to imply that the race happened at least partially in a field.

114 Only rarely thanks to a detailed archaeological study, can we find tangible traces of Early Medieval road maintenance. Like the one on the Roman tract running through Freisinger Moos, with new roads added to the network, see: Steidl and Wührer, 'Die römische Fernstraße Augsburg – Isartal', 179–84.

115 Vince, 'The Growth of Market Centres and Towns in the Area of the Mercian Hegemony', 185.

> on ðone pet, þanen on gosanwelle, of gosanwelle on Medeburne, up one þat strate, of þare strate on ðet rede sloh, of þane slo on snodeshelle, of snodeshelle eft on Dorcyn.[116]

The authenticity of the charter is generally accepted and it is seen as contemporary.[117] Correlating the boundary clause of this charter with the network of Roman roads and parish boundaries reveals that it does indeed refer to the Roman road from Cirencester to Mildenhall. The charter refers to other types of tracks in its text ('herepað', 'strate') and makes a clear distinction between them. The same road reappears in a slightly later charter from 955, S568, and is referred to again as 'brokenestret'.[118]

Can this be taken as a general rule reflecting the state of maintenance? Perhaps not, but it gives us a hint that there is some kind of linguistic and terminological difference between the roads that were in use and the ones that were not. Those kinds of labels were probably accidental in occurrence, and there was no 'system' behind them. It is nevertheless significant that two charters considered genuine make that distinction and that they are late. It remains open to debate how much we can trust such linguistic evidence, but in general, more attention should be placed on 'broken' place names connected with infrastructure. One example of that is Pontefract in Yorkshire. The name is clear, meaning 'broken bridge' in Latin, and there are Roman roads in the vicinity.[119] Orderic Vitalis mentions William hastening North to stop the rebellion against his rule in 1069, being stopped in Pontefract.[120] William encouters a crossing there, which is impossible to master by ferry-boat; rebuilding a bridge is considered, but rejected by the king on the grounds of strategy. More research is needed into the environmental data of river flows and riverbeds. Perhaps the Dere Street crossing or the site of the bridge can then be confirmed, if we consider the changes in the course of the river and water levels in the area due to climate and water levels changing. But one thing is clear: We need to give more attention to the names and adjectives denoting broken elements.

116 *The Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, 45–47 (S459): 'These are the bounds of Liddington: First from the Dorcan [stream] to the **broken street** [MF] along the street to Hlyde [Lidden Stream] than along the Hlyde to the eastern Hlyde valley [...] Next out through the orchard and from the orchard to the other military road to the pit and thence to the Geese Spring and from the Geese spring to the meadow stream and up to the street. From the street to the red slough and from the slough to Snode's Hill and from Snode's hill back to the Dorcan [stream].' [trans. MF].

117 Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex*, fig. 252; *The Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, 45–47.

118 *Charters of Glastonbury Abbey*, 464.

119 Everett-Heath, 'Pontefract'.

120 Ordericus Vitalis, *Orderici Vitalis Historiae Ecclesiasticae Libri Tredecem*, 194–95.

2.4 Obligations and Burdens

A number of additional research questions arise. What can the wording of the charters tell us about the legal status of the roads and their maintenance? We have mentioned already the controversy of the term *via publica*, and it is worth assessing this problem in depth. Charter S100 from the year 716 – being a gift of Aethelbald, King of Mercia, to Wihtred, his *comes*, and his wife Ansith – is particularly interesting. This charter is considered authentic, although a later date (c. 730 x 745) has been proposed as more probable.[121]

The Roman road to Oxford is mentioned in the boundary clause even though it does not form the direct boundary of the estate: '[E]t in aquilonale ulterius quam uia publica iacet'.[122] It is possible that in this case the use of the term 'via publica' was meant to specifically stress the character of the road, and maybe also the need to maintain it by the receiver of the grant under the common burden laws (the obligation to maintain bridges and roads, build fortifications, and serve in the army).[123] The presence of a complex Roman concept of 'via publica' has its parallels in Continental law codes, as in the case of Bavaria.[124] That the elaboration on the public character of the road might have been a later addition only stresses the possibility that it is a similar process that we are witnessing here.

The concept of common burdens as present in the charters has been put into question.[125] The main points of this criticism pertaining to our analysis here are: Firstly, bridge-building was rare before the tenth century and in general only a limited number of bridges were in use;[126] secondly, the Gumley

121 Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 184–86.

122 'And in the north extending for two acres beyond the public road': *Charters of Christ Church Canterbury,* I, no. 13 (S100).

123 The erroneous and antiquated term *trinoda necessitas* was already debunked at the beginning of the twentieth century by W. H. Stevenson, but is still being used from time to time; this is not the time and place to discuss now the evolution and reasons for the appearance and evolution of *trinoda necessitas*. We just have to remember that it is mentioned by name in only one charter, S230, and whether or not this charter is genuine has been repeatedly put into question, see: Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 240–43; Stevenson, 'Trinoda Necessitas'. Nevertheless it is important to note a contrary argument of George T. Dempsey, who has proposed that the charter might be authentic and believed the subscription giving its authorship to Aldhelm. One has to admit that this would make the life of all us, charter researchers, much easier, see, Dempsey, 'Legal Terminology in Anglo-Saxon England: The Trimoda Necessitas Charter'.

124 Esders, 'Late Roman Military Law in the Bavarian Code', 21.

125 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power.*

126 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, 1–38, 153–54.

Charter of 749[127] (introducing in written form the common burdens) is an alien form, imposed on England by the influence of St Boniface in order to bring the English practice in line with the Continental one,[128] even going as far as to say that '[t]he obligation to build bridges first appeared in the charters, not as a vital part of governance, but as a symbolic borrowing from Roman and Continental law';[129] thirdly, road maintenance was in no way covered by the obligations system.[130] Perhaps the problem lies with the vantage point: Many gaps can be filled when looking from the perspective of Roman infrastructure.

With the first point I agree only to a certain extent. While bridge building on new sites was definitely rare it was not non-existent before the tenth century.[131] What I disagree more strongly with is the level of maintenance and re-use. Perhaps many if not most bridges fell into a state of disrepair. But archaeological evidence and a close reading of the documents show that some of them did not, perhaps enough of them to form a significant 'critical mass' of governance resources requiring their own legal solutions.[132] With the second point, the analysis of Gumley Charter, I disagree. It is perhaps sufficient to say that I see the common burdens as first of all being inherited from common practice, and only second strengthened by the Frankish legal tradition introduced in England through Kent at a much earlier date. Brooks pointed to Augustine and Archbishop Theodore as possible sources of those obligations.[133] In other words, while the form might be influenced by Continental examples, the solutions and the problem (the maintenance of bridges and roads) are very much contemporary and local. The Gumley Charter read in isolation from the infrastructure on the ground will look alien. But seen together with such infrastructures, it will show itself to be a powerful instrument of activation.

My answer to the third point leads us naturally back to the close examination of the charter evidence. We can deduce a set of implied obligations

127 Look: Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England*, 25; Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 188–95; Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth and Ninth Century England', 76.

128 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, 30–37.

129 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, 149.

130 Cooper, 'Obligation and Jurisdiction', 133–73.

131 Salisbury, 'An 8th-Century Mercian Bridge over the Trent at Cromwell, Nottinghamshire, England'.

132 Compare with the list in Dymond, 'Roman Bridges on Dere Street, County Durham, with a General Appendix on the Evidence For Bridges in Roman Britain'. The list is by no means exhaustive.

133 Brooks, 'Bridges, Law and Power in Medieval England, 700-1400 by Alan Cooper', 1370.

from the wording of the charters. In charter S9 from 686, Eadric, King of Kent gives an estate in Stodmarsh, Kent to St Peter's Minster in Canterbury. The charter is early, and although there have been serious doubts about its authenticity[134] the newest edition has shifted the view toward acceptance.[135] The Latin bounds refer to 'fordstreata publica'. In all probability this is a ford on a Roman road, partly a causeway, that in Roman times led to the island of Thanet,[136] and possibly the road that we can identify with the Margary 11 route.[137] At the time of the grant, it had been used for transport of goods to Fordwich,[138] a town that due to the changing of water levels and coastline became the port of Canterbury; it is said to be the most probable place where the Roman road crossed the river Stour.[139]

The Stodmarsh estate might have been a part of what Everitt categorized as Kentish 'river estates'.[140] They share a series of characteristics: They are placed in a river valley, always close to a major Roman road, their place-names are of an early type and provenance, and they have an association with important Roman and Romano-British sites.[141] They are nothing short of a perfect environment to foster some form of continued maintenance and local obligations. And indeed, the wording of 'fordstreata publica' might suggest certain obligations towards the maintenance of the road – stressing its public character in a charter from an early date, from Kent, now considered to be broadly genuine.

We find a similar situation in the estate of Crux Easton (S268), where the 'public road' is not explicitly a boundary but is mentioned as running through the estate, although the wording is unclear as to whether it is not just a boundary. What is interesting is that the charter includes also a mention of common burdens later on, with specific reference to bridgework.[142] Nicholas Brooks did not doubt the authenticity of the charter but had some questions as to how it fitted the common burdens introduction in Wessex.[143] Susan Kelly also sees it as most likely authentic.[144] Something lies in the phrase 'public road' – the question is not 'is it there', but what does it denote, where

134 Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 68–70.
135 *The Charters of St Augustine's Abbey,* 31–33 (S9).
136 Codrington, *Roman Roads in Britain*, 42.
137 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, 40.
138 Hines, *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century*, 69.
139 *Fordwich. Archaeological Assessment Document*, 1–5.
140 Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England*, 45.
141 Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England*, 49.
142 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey* no. 7 (S268).
143 Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth and Ninth Century England', 81.
144 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey* no. 7 (S268).

(both in time and in space) does it have its origins, and why did it find its way into the charter in that context?

Eric John and Nicholas Brooks have already outlined the way in which the Church was taking over the maintenance of Roman roads and bridges that survived in a reparable state until Early Medieval times.[145] They differ, however, in their descriptions of the situation before the Gumley Charter of 749: Was the Church exempt from military service and services to the public infrastructure (John), or was it covered by it but the obligation was not enforced (Brooks)? John cleverly put that discussion to rest, stating: 'In my book this is the same as freedom from military obligations.'[146] It seems that, at least when considering Francia, no one ever *explicitly* exempted the clergy from military obligations, but some bishops and clerics tried to claim such exemption.[147]

The Theodosian Code excluded the maintenance of roads and bridges from 'sordida munera', from which the Church could be exempt and bound those obligations with the land:

> Absit, ut nos instructionem viae publicae et pontium stratarumque operam titulis magnorum principum dedicatam inter sordida munera numeremus. Igitur ad instructiones reparationesque itinerum pontiumque nullum genus hominum nulliusque dignitatis ac venerationis meritis cessare oportet. Domos etiam divinas ac venerandas ecclesias tam laudabili titulo libenter adscribimus. Quam legem cunctarum provinciarum iudicibus intimari conveniet, ut noverint, quae viis publicis antiquitas tribuenda decrevit, sine ullius vel reverentiae vel dignitatis exceptione praestanda.[148]

145 John, 'The Imposition of the Common Burdens on the Lands of the English Church', 117–129; John, *Land Tenure in Early England*; Brooks, *Church, State and Access to Resources in Early Anglo-Saxon England*; Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth and Ninth Century England'.

146 John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, n. 3 p. 65.

147 Wood, 'Land Tenure and Military Obligations in the Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian Kingdoms: The Evidence of Bede and Boniface in Context', 3–22.

148 Codex Theodosianus 15.3.6: 'We should denominate as compulsory public services of a menial nature the construction of public roads and bridges and the work on pavements dedicated by the titles of great Emperors. Therefore no class of men, by merit of any high rank or veneration, shall be exempt from the construction and repair of roads and bridges. We also gladly ascribe the property of the divine imperial household and the venerable churches to such a laudable list. The judges of all the provinces shall be notified of this law, so that they may know that what antiquity decreed should be assigned to the public roads must be furnished without exception of any person on the grounds of either reverence or high rank.' *The Theodosian Code and Novels*, 433.

The Code had a widespread circulation in Merovingian Gaul, and was on its own as potent a way of transmitting Roman law as its derivative, the Breviary of Alaric.[149] Under Frankish influence coming through Kent, the obligation to maintain transport infrastructure could have spread in early English law. Therefore, it is much more probable that such obligations were just implied and not stated point blank. One might therefore hypothesise that in boundary clauses where the 'public road' is not strictly a boundary of an estate, it might imply certain obligations. Conversely, even in the case of other obligations coming into the set of 'sordida munera', it has been speculated that they had its origins if not in Roman law directly than at least in Roman legal tradition.[150]

I am not trying to say here that common burdens had Roman origins as a whole. I am just trying to point out possible elements of such obligations linked to the Roman tradition in maintaining roads; that the most probable way of reception was a local tradition *and* a new fresh impulse through St Augustine's mission and the Frankish context early on (a kind of reverse feedback mechanism); and although the charters cannot offer a conclusive argument, the presumptive evidence supports such a view. If roads are to be a useful governance resource at a higher level of administrative sophistication, there is a need for legal mechanisms of their maintenance. Otherwise they cannot really be activated for their intended purpose.[151] As noted by Nick Higham, the rulers of the Early Medieval polities in Britain were able to conduct works on a large scale (one is inclined to think about works like Offa's Dyke) and some sort of lingering Roman tradition of obligations had to lie behind that ability.[152]

It takes time before such obligations acquire a land-wide character, and the only proof that we have is a double jackpot of unsuitability: both fabricated and post-Conquest.[153] Famously, the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* talk of four major roads, three of them almost definitely of Roman origin and one probably pre-dating Roman times, which are protected by the King's Peace. The law was not only concerned with crimes committed on the road.

149 Wood, 'The Code in Merovingian Gaul', 159.

150 Seebohm, *The English Village Community*, 403–5.

151 Although they can still serve other uses, suchn as transhumance, the moving of livestock between pastures between May and September; arguably such usage can itself be seen as basic maintenance, see: Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 64, 70.

152 Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 232.

153 On precise arguments for the fabricated origins of this coed, see: Cooper, 'The King's Four Highways: Legal Fiction Meets Fictional Law', 351–70; O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace*.

It states that those roads, whose maintenance previously must have been solely in the hands of the local actors, are now protected by the king. That means that if a structure obstructs the road or someone alters its course, it constitutes a public offence.[154] We have direct parallels to such practices in Continental laws, for example in the Visigothic Code.[155]

But why then do we even work with the *Leges Edwardi* if it is, essentially, a fabrication, and if the idea of the King's Peace, although influenced by earlier examples, was also strongly based on northern French tradition of the tenth and eleventh century?[156] Because as much as it is a fabrication, its author 'knew some written Frankish law and read narrative works to understand preconquest England. He was a foreigner, an immigrant, with, nevertheless, an interest in his new surroundings [...] His views of the conquest and its aftermath did not interfere with his ability to describe the law around him.'[157] In my hypothesis, I see the passage about roads in this 'ideal' legal code as a form of reference to obligations hinted at in the charters, which on those four tracks of countrywide importance receive additional support and protection from the king's law. Presumptive evidence? Yes. But one that cannot be wholeheartedly ignored.

Could we say that – similar to the bridge of Rochester – this process is a continuation and evolution of the Roman system of obligations towards the maintenance of the roads? I would not go as far as to say that there is a general direct link. Frankish legal practice, coming through Kent and spreading in Britain, reintroduced some selected aspects of the Roman law which was then confronted with local practices in places where there must have been at least a tradition of 'via publica' (in the Roman understanding of the term). Those local practices were mutated forms of former Roman obligations entering custom. The obligations meant that the road had to be maintained by local actors and were possibly less of a continuation and more a revival along the lines of Roman practice – an activation strategy. Some sort of Roman tradition must have endured, hence all the distinctions we find in the boundary clauses. The Church stepped in, along the lines prescribed in the Theodosian Code.[158] What is striking, is the Frankish influence, as traced through the deposition of Frankish

154 *Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, 168–69.

155 *Leges Visigothorum*, bk. VIII.4.24, 'De damnis iter publicum concludentium'.

156 *Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, 63.

157 O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace*, 60.

158 We know that at the time of Theodore and Hadrian, Aldhelm was taught Roman Law at Canterbury, see: Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', 52; On Aldhelm see also: Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', 15–69.

material and artefacts, spreading along the network of Roman roads, with particular importance attached to the corridor leading from east Kent towards the Upper Thames Valley.[159] Important centres of distribution of Frankish material include places along the Roman road southwest of Canterbury, and Watling Street between Rochester and North Downs.[160] Even the adaptation and activation of Roman infrastructures follows the Roman road network – yet another function they possessed as governance resources.

The strong and entrenched elements of the Roman law of obligations, e.g., the right of way, started entering the customary law of the land, around the 450s, in the increasingly fragmented and multicultural environment. Their survival was probably dictated not by a particular attachment to the Roman past (although this cannot be excluded as a possible factor) but by necessity. Later on, in the increasingly fragmented polity landscape, using elements of Roman law became a practical solution, respected by local rulers and practiced by the population with or without conscious knowledge of their connection with Roman legal tradition. The 'Kentish intake' of Roman-influenced law from the late 590s onwards must have met along the way isolated pockets of surviving obligations or places where the tradition was vivid enough to revive. There is also an interesting late example of the reception of such obligations, which also brings the 'herepath' into the orbit of possibly Roman-influenced forms of maintenance. According to the laws of Cnut we can imply that:

> [T]he repair of bridges and presumably the maintenance of "herepaths", was a task connected with military service. Thus, the word "herepath" may actually mean a road maintained by the army. This situation is reminiscent of the military use and maintenance of major roads in the Romano-British period, a concept that seems to have continued into early English law. This could imply a degree of consensus in post-Roman politics, whereby petty kings are best able to enforce laws that are perceived to be just and "traditional" by the populace.[161]

This could be an example of how Roman legal tradition was turned into written law following a period of low-key existence in customary law and

159 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 185–89, 195.
160 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*, 197.
161 Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*, 104–5.

exemplifies how the presumption of a strict military/civilian divide in Roman times has blurred our understanding of post-Roman adaptations. Charters offer such examples; roads from S1590 and S1340 are former Roman roads maintained as military tracks in the Early Medieval period.[162]

What we are observing here is an impression on the agricultural land and road system, left by almost five centuries of Roman governance. This impression did not disappear overnight but because of the high degree of regionalisation there was no unified survival of Roman law or legal practice. The main enemy of this practical survival was probably the slowly changing pattern of land ownership, in addition to an increasingly fragmented political landscape that nevertheless clearly maintained a connection with the administrative framework of the late Roman period. But the crux of the matter is that the very process of change was actually the most important element of survival. There is a whole plethora of ways in which those roads were used, reused and repurposed when necessary, merging into the Early Medieval landscape. That process of change was what actually made Britain a still recognisable part of the the world of the Roman Empire even after the beginning of the fifth century.

3. The Western Charters

3.1 Source Introduction

When we talk about the 'Welsh charters', or, as we call them here, the western charters, we are in fact referring to three sets: A minute collection of charters, in terms of size, written as marginalia in the *Lichfield Gospels* known as the Llandeilo charters;[163] the collection of Llancarfan charters; and the biggest of the three, the *Book of Llandaff*, which is a compilation created anytime between 1120-1185.[164] No earlier Welsh charters have survived in their original form (although the earliest of the charters written into the *Lichfield Gospels* are relatively early and some of them must preserve their original form), and the geographical scope is even more limited than it is in

162 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 147; Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', 2.
163 Jenkins and Owen, 'The Welsh Marginalia in the Lichfield Gospels. Part 1', 37–66; Jenkins and Owen, 'The Welsh Marginalia in the Lichfield Gospels. Part 2', 91–120.
164 Huws prefers a later date in Huws, 'The Making of Liber Landavensis'; Wendy Davies puts the most probable time of creation in the period 1120-1129, see: Davies, 'Liber Landavensis: Its Construction and Credibility', 339.

the case of the eastern charters.[165] This of course makes it uniquely difficult to put the matter of authenticity of the charters within the collection at rest.

Scholarship is divided as to whether the Llandaff charters are forgeries, genuine documents, or late copies.[166] This chapter is of course not the place to reiterate the discussion over the possible forgery of the Llandaff charters, but certain important points have to be made. Firstly, the boundary clauses might be later additions.[167] Secondly, the charters have been compiled with a particular goal in mind. Their political and ecclesiastical purpose in the context of the twelfth century remains clear: Bishop Urban of the seat of Llandaff was creating a set of claims and a 'legend' for his orthodox Catholic see in opposition to the bishoprics of St David's and Hereford.[168] To that extent, he was using collections of earlier charters pertaining to numerous other 'bishoprics' (the organization of the early Welsh Church was so scattered and unorthodox that the parenthesis is certainly justified) to create an early history for his see.

But through the work of Wendy Davies a process of reinterpretation has allowed us to see those charters in a different light. The charters show remarkable connexions between the late Roman and Early Medieval land holding patterns.[169] The charters have been 'rehabilitated' as documents heavily edited but based on the original tradition of the Welsh cartularies (although how exactly they were kept is disputed; they might have originated as separate sheets kept in boxes). Those cartularies in turn must have contained charters derived from a (probably corrupted) form of late Roman private deed.[170] This argument can be greatly strengthened by the findings of Charles-Edwards that some form of local Romance language derived from Romano-British Latin was spoken at home as late as the year 700 in parts of Britain.[171] This discovery has enormous consequences: We might say that the various local versions of *Romanness* were still understood linguistically. A

165 For a detailed discussion of these charters in the context of other Celtic societies, see: Davies, 'Charter-Writing and Its Uses in Early Medieval Celtic Societies', 99–112.

166 Wendy Davies sees them as edited versions of genuine charters, see: Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*. This view is at least partially supported by Charles-Edwards in Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*. For the opposing view, seeing the *Book of Llandaff* manly as a mirror of eleventh and twelfth century South Wales, see: Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages*.

167 Coe, 'Dating the Boundary Clauses in the Book of Llandaff', 1–43.

168 Davies, 'Liber Landavensis: Its Construction and Credibility', 337.

169 Davies, 'Land and Power in Early Medieval Wales', 3–23.

170 Davies, 'Liber Landavensis: Its Construction and Credibility', 347. A view shared by Eric John, although he has stressed that the only factor in the continuation of late Roman private practice was through 'diplomatic influence'. John, *Land Tenure in Early England*, 1.

171 Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*, 113–15.

Latin text of a charter in the sixth century would be of a very different register than the spoken vernacular, but it would nevertheless remain a familiar and understandable document. If that was the case it might also explain parts of the continued Roman legal practice in the area of obligations and alienations. As Alex Woolf has remarked, '[i]f we free ourselves from the terminology of kingship what we seem to be observing in the Llandaff material is a tenurial system remarkably similar to that which existed in the later Roman West."[172] This shows a rather remarkable convergence with the rest of the post-Roman world, and the topic of the prominence of kings might have something to do with the alienation of land, as we shall see later. Paradoxically though, this convergence was achieved through regionalisation.

The charters have probably been heavily edited. The identity of the earliest bishops and their actual connection to the Llandaff see is dubious as well. For example, Oudoceus, if we were to believe in the chronological sequence of the Book, would remain alive for as long as eight generations.[173] We cannot, therefore, believe the Llandaff charters in everything that their authors state about Roman infrastructure. Nevertheless, one can assume that the compliers tried to be as precise as possible in copying or updating their boundary clauses in order to preserve the strongest claim possible. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the clauses reflect the situation of the landscape as present at the date of the editing, compiling or rewriting. We can speculate that the *original* charters might have contained more references to surviving Roman infrastructure than the edited ones. As Roman infrastructure disappeared from the landscape and its original function was gone, it might have lost its relevance for subsequent generations of compilers. The *Book of Llandaff* is, after all, a 'collection of collections'.[174]

The content and references to Roman infrastructure remain valid despite the contested authenticity of the documents. What use has a forged boundary clause that nobody can follow in the actual landscape, even roughly? We should give these texts a limited benefit of the doubt, especially if at least in some cases we can speak of contemporary (or broadly contemporary, i.e., still Early Medieval) forgeries. As noted by David Bates: 'Forgery has always been a difficult term. It can, for example, imply a document created *de novo* to claim what in fact has never been held. It may, however, be used in the case of a document created to meet contemporary norms, which in fact does no more than couch long-held rights and possessions in language acceptable

172 Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', 366.

173 Jones, 'The Book of Llandaff', 142.

174 Davies, 'Liber Landavensis: Its Construction and Credibility', 343.

to contemporaries."[175] These are remarks we need to keep in mind when analysing both the 'Welsh' and the 'Anglo-Saxon' charter material. Forgeries are also reflections of various processes of adaptation and activation.

For us, from the point of view of research on Roman infrastructure surviving into the post-Roman period, the most interesting ones are, of course, the ones claiming to belong to the three 'oldest' bishops – Dubricius, Teilo, and Oudoceus, and the set of the 'suffragans': Ufelwy, Aidan, Elwystyl, Junapeius, Comereg, Arwystyl, Gwrwan, Gwyddlon, Edilfyw, Grecielus. Some of the bishops mentioned in the Book are either difficult or plainly impossible to date, and we can only rely on the internal chronology (i.e., the order within the Book and the Wendy Davies system of ordering charters according to the internal chronology of the witness lists).[176] It seems that the examplars of the earliest ones date to *c.* 550.[177] That makes them still products of the world which was in transition from Late Antique to Early Medieval Britain. These are Latin documents that still could be understood by the people who perused them and were contemporary with the reigns of Chlothar I in Gaul and Justinian I in Constantinople.

The geographical limitation is, of course, unfortunate, but then again, Southeast Wales was probably one of the most urbanised and economically rich areas of Roman Britain.[178] That of course does not make the evidence representative – the situation was different in other parts of Roman Wales – but it gives us a chance to retrieve more information than could have potentially been recovered from what are presumably existing and now lost charters from other parts of the province. Southeast Wales was geographically and topographically different to the rest of the province, hence it contained different forms of property ownership, more fluidity in the patterns of ownership, and more need for records of transactions. Additionally, there is still much to be done in the area of archaeological surveys and excavations connected with re-use of Roman infrastructure in Wales.

3.2 Roads in Western Charters

When assessing the most interesting names and terms used for roads in Welsh charters, the key ones are 'hen fford' – old road, and 'y ffordd mawr'

175 Bates, 'Charters and Historians of Britain and Ireland', 3.

176 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 164–88.

177 That is, if we follow Wendy Davies' chronology. Patrick Sims-Williams has offered a slightly later dating, moving the beginning of the period of the charters' creation about 50 years forward, see: Sims-Williams, 'The Llandaf Charters'.

178 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 161.

('irford maur'), or in Latin 'via magna' – the high (big) road. They do not always mean that there is a Roman road being mentioned, but often it is so.

'Old road' appears only once – in the Llandeilo'r Fan charter. But the high road is much more popular and appears in thirteen unique charters. In most cases, it is fully possible to affix the charters at least tentatively to proposed or confirmed Roman roads. The two exceptions are Cecin Pennicelli and Henn Riu Gunnua. In Cecin Pennicelli there is a *high road* going probably up from Monmouth towards the northwest, but I was unable to associate it with an existing or proposed road.[179] The Henn Riu Gunnua[180] charter also mentions a *high road* but we do not know exactly where the estate was located – we can only suppose it was in the vicinity of Llandaff.[181] Among the most interesting and informative examples of instances where tentative identification was possible is the Lann Garth charter of King Idon, which notes a grant in the parish of Llanarth in Monmouthshire.[182] First let us look at the surrounding landscape. There is a Roman fort in Abergavenny – *Gobannium* – which underwent a civilian transformation in the second half of the third century.[183] A road led south from there onwards to Usk, but first swerved east and formed a knee shape. North of that swerve is the land of the grant, and the high road follows for a short stretch the run of the Clawdd Brook, being the equivalent of the modern A40 trunk road.[184]

Nothing in the text tells us anything about the state of the road or its possible usage. Dating the charter, needless to say, is extremely difficult and can only be done through the list of witnesses. St Teilo himself heads the list and we can safely discount him – his legendary persona being much larger than life. We might have a bit more luck with a certain Elguoret (Elwredd) whom Davies dates as active in the late sixth century (ca. 595-600). But there is a lot of material in this charter that derives from considerably later than *c.* 600 – like the boundary clause.[185] If the charter evidences the road, then it evidences it as late as the late eighth century.[186]

There are also a number of smaller mentions that are difficult to support archaeologically. They can be grouped geographically and according to

179 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 264.
180 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 268.
181 Davies, *The Book of Llandaf and the Norman Church in Wales*, 78.
182 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 122.
183 Blockley, 'Excavations on the Roman Fort at Abergavenny', 169–242; Ponsford, 'Abergavenny, Castle Street Car Park', 98–100.
184 Sherman and Evans, *Roman Roads in Southeast Wales*, 37.
185 Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, 95.
186 Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, 143–44.

the tentative Roman roads they refer to. In the charters of Lann Cinmarch and Lann Dinuil,[187] the eastern part of the Roman road between Chepstow and Loughor[188] (or a branch thereof) features prominently. The middle stretch of that road in the vicinity of Cowbridge and Aberthin is present in the charter of Villa Fratrus.[189] Similarly, there is a Roman road in the charter of the church of Elidon[190] (Cardiff to Neath), and the same road could also be referenced in the boundary clause of the Penn Onn charter.[191] A further element of the road network around Cardiff comes from the charter of Riv Brein, with possible remnants of the Cardiff-Caerphilly road.[192]

Much more comes from the vicinity of Monmouth. More archaeological work has to be done in the vicinity of the Roman fort of Wonastow (already proposed in the recent archaeological assessment),[193] as confirmed by the mention in the charter of Ellgnou of a Roman road running from the Roman fort to Monmouth.[194] On the southern stretch of that road, leading from Usk to Wonastow and further up to Monmouth, there is Llangovan from the charter of Mamouric.[195] A road north of Monmouth leading probably to *Ariconium* is visible in the boundaries of the Llan Petyr (Peterstow) estate granted to the see as a penance.[196] That concentration of mentions in Monmouthshire is interesting, but the Llandaff charters are too small of a set to make statistical conclusions out of it.

Now we come to the most interesting of charters for the study of Roman infrastructure – the charter pertaining to the estate of Lann Guruaet, later to be known as Llandeilo'r Fan.[197] It is the only instance in the whole set of the Book of Llandaff where a 'hen ffordd' – an old road – is mentioned as a boundary.[198] The charter is riddled with formulations which disqualify it as a source from the early eighth century.[199] Nevertheless, the topographical and infrastructural details are of great interest.

187 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 165; 173.
188 Sherman and Evans, *Roman Roads in Southeast Wales*, 18.
189 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 260.
190 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 157.
191 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 216.
192 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 257.
193 *Land North of Wonastow Road, Monmouth, Monmouthshire Archaeological Assessment*.
194 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 202.
195 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 207.
196 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 261.
197 *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 154.
198 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 30.
199 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 88.

There is a Roman fort at Llandeilo Fawr, around 30 miles to the south of Llandeilo'r Fan, discovered quite recently, in 2003, during a geophysical survey. Its existence and position had been suspected already since the 1980s because it is a natural one-day march stop between Carmarthen and Llandovery – both important Roman forts.[200] The investigations have concluded that the fort guarded the road that follows the modern A40 – from east to west, turning north at Llandeilo Fawr. But there is yet another road that might be Roman, running through the town itself, north-south, over the bridge on the river Towy. That road run next to the church and churchyard of Llandeilo Fawr, as identified from aerial photographs.[201] The site of the cemetery would then predate the church, which then could have been built on a Romano-British cemetery next to the road. The road would run south to the Roman fort in Loughor. Those two roads converged somewhere in the zone of the modern town and the road mentioned in the charter would then be the north-south track.

The phrase 'hen fford', old road, does not necessarily tell us much about the state the track was in the time. At best it can denote that it was present there for a long time, especially given the late date of the boundary clause. But all those tracks in the area are of immense infrastructural and economic significance. To the northwest of Llandovery, twenty miles straight west from Llandeilo'r Fan, lay the Dolaucothi gold mines and the Roman fort at Pumsaint.[202] It has already been argued that gold mining continued in some form in connection with the Early Medieval estate of Llandeilo, including the site of the Llandeilo of the Five Saints of Caeo (not to be confused with Llandeilo Fawr or Llandeilo'r Fan). This was an estate including the settlement of Pumsaint and the neighbouring gold mines.[203]

If there was a crossroads at Llandeilo Fawr, this was a crucial node in north-south transport from the mines to the coast. As mentioned before, the Llandaff charters are basically undatable in a precise way. Bishop Oudoceus witnessed the charter and he, as already mentioned, is a complicated character, stretched between history and legend – Wendy Davies has put the tentative time of his episcopate between 650-700 (if we assume the existence of one person by the name of Oudoceus).[204] If that were the case, together with Jones' arguments about the possible continuation of gold

200 Hughes, *The Llandeilo Roman Forts*.
201 James, 'Air Photography of Ecclesiastical Sites in South Wales', 75.
202 Lewis and Jones, 'The Dolaucothi Gold Mines', 244–72.
203 Jones, 'Tir Telych', the Gwestfau of Cynwyl Gaeo and Cwmwd Caeo', 88–89.
204 Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, 97–101.

mining in some form, the road would still be a visible enough landmark at the end of the seventh century.

There is a marked change in the radiocarbon footprint that would point towards closing major mining operations and a switch to less labour and infrastructure demanding methods (like surface extracting) around the year 800.[205] That gives us a window of around 150 years during which the road mentioned in the charter might have been in use and still played a role not significantly different than in Roman times. A working gold mining operation and at least passable road network connected to it is a major feat of governance resources activation and adaptation. There are political, economic, and symbolic consequences of such resources and a need of a legal framework to exploit those various forms of capital. This framework, as we shall see, was a result of a particular strategy of adaptation.

3.3 Alienation

The legal continuity in the charters poses an interesting problem. Wendy Davies has stressed the problem of alienation and its connection with Roman legal tradition in the charters. She has traced how in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, rulers of Welsh polities (Davies prefers the word 'kings' although she herself notes that there are grants without royal presence and that those grants might denote zones without royal authority, which in the terminology of this book we would call areas of limited governance) assumed the unique, kingly and imperial power of alienation of land.[206] This allowed them to redraw the map of their polities as they saw fit. Such a process is similar to the ones occurring in other parts of Europe at same the time, as well as slightly later. As Davies writes:

> [A]lienation appears to have become increasingly difficult in the late Empire and restrictions on alienation only became rescindable by direct imperial action, even where private property was concerned. This presumably applied in the Roman provinces of Britain – and therefore in Wales – as much as elsewhere. If so, then the unique capacity of early Welsh kings to alienate property is best explained by their assumption of quasi-imperial powers in order to release theory own lands – and the eventual evocation of quasi-imperial consent for non-royal alienation.[207]

205 Jones, 'Tir Telych', the Gwestfau of Cynwyl Gaeo and Cwmwd Caeo', 88.
206 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 50.
207 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 162–63.

The study of this particular legal process has a lot to do with the study of Roman infrastructure. Continuous disposing of land in the same manner could preserve not only certain patterns of land ownership but also the structure of the field system. To Davies' important and correct claim that the assumption of kingly and imperial behaviour had a connection with the fact that it allowed alienation of land (i.e., in Roman law only the emperor could perform such an action), I would like to add another important aspect.[208]

Much has been written on the subject of Welsh genealogies and its connection with the Roman past. Recently, important new theories linking Welsh genealogies with Old English examples have been posed,[209] and their creation can probably be pushed back to the end of the ninth century.[210] Pillar of Eliseg, dated to the mid-ninth century also tries to preserve this legal fiction by deriving the ancestry of the kings of Powys from Magnus Maximus. But if we add at the centre of their creation a legal requirement, the sometimes uncanny claims linking Welsh rulers to the last Roman emperors known or recorded in their oral or written history gains a new, practical aspect. Apart from the symbolic and legendary claim, it gave them a legal basis to dispose land and alienate it as rightful heirs or lieutenants of the Roman emperors. A genealogical fiction had very real legal consequences. It also shows a particular attachement to Roman legal infrastructure – a key example of a particular, regionalised adaptation of *Romanness* that had practical effects in the way land was organised and disposed.

Viewed in such light, the genealogies gain a new purpose – not only as historical or pseudo-historical documents but also as a legal basis for the disposition of land. By giving the Welsh rulers an 'imperial' ancestry, they granted them the legal basis to alienate. Since the written forms that we can research are universally quite late and obviously have their sources in much earlier, oral traditions, we cannot precisely date the beginning of this phenomenon. Practically though it should have started around the 450s, and then strengthened with the real weakening or disappearance of Roman administrative powers in the region. It must, due to a lack of absolutely convincing evidence, remain a hypothesis – there is no way to practically deduce such purpose and intent on the part of Welsh rulers. But nevertheless, it remains a logical possibility.

208 Johnston, *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, 181.
209 Guy, 'The Anglo-Saxon Background to the Welsh Genealogical Tradition'.
210 Guy, 'The Textual History of the Harleian Genealogies', 1–25.

As the field structure changed in Wales in the Early Medieval period,[211] a shift in the high-status settlement occurred after the beginning of the eighth century,[212] and there is a significant lack of evidence to link the Roman field structure to the one after the eighth century.[213] The rulers of Welsh polities ultimately claimed not only a fabled but also a *legal* connection with the Roman emperors of the past, thus allowing them to partition the land in a manner that more and more diverged from the Roman model. In some of the genealogies the rulers claim to be descendants from the last Roman officials in the region, which probably nevertheless gave them significant legal advantage.[214] Clearly not everybody could be an emperor's son.

The practice of claiming descent from the law-giving or law-executing Romans is more than just a convenient literary and epigraphic fiction. As a strategy of adaptation, it tells us a lot about the audience of this fiction – there was, apparently, a set of expectations on Welsh rulers that they would adhere to the however distant fiction of executing law *because* they were remotedly a part of the Roman bureaucratic machine. That this claim was supported partly through tools like inscriptions – a form of infrastructure of governance derived from Roman practice as well – but at the same time was contrary to the *spirit* of the written Roman law (being a descendant of an emperor was actually meaningless when it comes to alienation) shows the great paradox of this strategy. While it dismantled the Roman reality, it did it in a Roman way – a practice that will resurface many times in this book.

This dependence on remnants of Roman law shows not its importance in the lives of the Early Medieval Welsh society (even assuming a high degree of continuity, the practical impact of Roman law in everyday life must have dropped precipitously after the the 450s) but rather its importance as a legitimizing tool for rulers of the fragmented polities that emerged in the region. It is a fine example of legal 'ossification', where the requirement to have a connection to the imperial government seemed to linger much longer than the imperial government itself.

What about obligations in the Welsh context? How did they survive in the 'law of the land'? The examples, although extremely important and interesting, are not numerous enough to give us a full picture. It is a signal, but difficult to interpret. The early grants can still be seen as entrenched

211 *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 251.
212 Seaman, 'Defended Settlement in Early Medieval Wales', 43.
213 Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 62.
214 Phillimore, *The Annales Cambriae and Old Welsh Genealogies*, 176.

somehow in the way Roman law viewed such transmission of land: i.e., they might also have involved the *tributa* connected with the land.[215] But as examples of surviving obligations the Welsh charters are speaking in too quiet a voice to be heard.

4. Conclusions

Is the elusive beast, *Romanitas*, somewhere there in the charters? Can we find traces of it? We can deduce certain remnants of it in the examples shown above; the possible traces of obligation to observe a right of way; the complex question of land structure being changed under the new regime of fragmented polities and the need to justify it in the tradition of Roman law. There is, especially in the case of roads and milestones, a sharp (although difficult to interpret) distinction between the remnants of the Roman past, elements that continue it or are derived from it, and finally a new superstructure.

What stands out is the connection between mining or extracting operations inherited or re-used from Roman times, and the survival of the use of the roads that connected them. We see that in the network of 'salt-streets' in the kingdom of the Hwicce and in Wales in connection with the gold mines of Dolaucothi. That might indicate a continued economic significance of the Roman road network *before* the bridge and road-building programme of the late ninth century. That programme, as Harrison has rightly observed, broke at least in part with the old road network.[216] The salt production and transportation evidence is particularly important. It seems to be a wide-ranging phenomenon, utilizing directly various types of Roman infrastructure: Roads, taxes, and extraction sites. Adapting it to the new realities and simply 'making it work' was an enormous undertaking. The charter evidence shows that the salt industry showed remarkable robustness in a number of regions and it exhibits strategies of adaptation that result in what can be seen as stability. In the territory of the Hwicce it resembles a relay race where the infrastructures are passed on to subsequent successor polities while still maintaining a very Roman core. This was not an isolated phenomenon in Britain. The long-lasting care for local resources was a crucial element of community sustainability and shows how care (and

215 Mirković, *The Later Roman Colonate and Freedom*, 85.

216 Although I do not share his view on the scale of the break, there is evidently a significant shift from the ninth century onwards, see: Harrison, 'Change: 400–1250', 50–55.

adaptation) of infrastructures was one of the crucial forces in pre-Conquest Britain.[217]

In essence, those charters show us how the *post*-Roman world was being disposed and governed and what strategies were employed to adapt to new circumstances. Probably the most important is a sense of surviving obligations in the east and the maintenance of a Roman legal fiction in the west – already strongly fading away at the time when the documents that survived to our time were drafted. In all probability there was more – probably most strongly visible in the lost northern charters. The Roman legal obligations must have somehow entered the customary practice of the land and survived long enough to be visible in the charters drafted almost 250 years after active Roman legal practice ceased to be a factor in Britain.[218]

Charters are both instruments of activation – they make it possible to use material Roman infrastructures – and records of the strategies of activation. They are also the archives of distinction – they preserve the traces of the changing ways in which *Romanitas* was invoked, governance was performed, and the Roman infrastructure that surrounded their compilators and scribes was used. Thus in many ways the very late ones are just as interesting as the very early ones. And the forgeries – however complicated the term is in itself – are just as important as the genuine documents. We started this chapter defining charters as being grants of land or records of privilege. But we can now see them also as much more: Narrative sources encompassing the relationships of small worlds of Britain with their past and as records of the relationship of Early Medieval Britain with the Late Antique one and with the ever-present phantom limb of the Empire.

217 See Oosthuizen, *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland*. Rosamond Faith has very aptly recognized those arrangements as a part of a 'moral economy' in Early Medieval Britain, see: Faith, *The Moral Economy*, 20-23.

218 See also the striking parallels of similar obligations surviving in Wales and Northern England as late as the twelfth century: Barrow, 'Northern English Society in the Early Middle Ages', 14–15.

III. Accomodations: Roman Urban Spaces in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Britain

1. A Very Long Goodbye: Recognising Roman Urbanism in Britain

In the collection of the British Museum we can find a small writing tablet, barely ten centimeters high, made from whale bone, probably in the eighth century.[1] It was found in rural Suffolk and is an unlikely candidate to start talking about the adaptations of urban space. But this little object exemplifies a lot of what we will be talking about in this chapter. First of all, it represents a form of infrastructure, in this case the infrastructure of writing. Secondly, it is a direct adaptation of a Roman writing tablet, a form of text technology that lived on in Britain; a little hand-held, portable notebook that would be recognisable for a Roman solider on the Hadrian's Wall and a Kentish monk alike. Thirdly, there are faint traces of runic letters scratched onto it. Most of them make very little sense, but some seem to suggest that the scribe was practicing Latin words or word endings.

The little writing tablet is a gem of an object. But it also embodies the process of adaptation and code-switching that accompanied the fate of all Roman infrastructures in Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain. While they were often adapted out of their intital context they remained bound to the legacy of the empire that helped to create them. At the same time, they became inherent parts of the landscape of Britain, and they accommodated new cultural and linguistic factors. Their existence places them beyond a simple continuity/discontinuity dichotomy, but at the same time they remained visibly part of the imperial Roman legacy. Their new emanations might not even have been produced by actors that we would describe as 'Roman' and yet they would still instantly evoke the imperial idea for a traveller coming from the Mediterranean.

This chapter will focus on uses and re-uses of Roman urban spaces and their infrastructure in the post-Roman and Early Medieval period as precisely those adapted from shards of the empire. We will start from the brief overview of available sources, and then look at the problem in

1 *Writing Tablet*, eighth century, British Museum, 1902,0315.1.

three periods: The sub-Roman, the pre-conversion, and the period up to the time of Bede. Scholars have been working extensively on the subject of Late Antique and Early Medieval British towns. Studies focusing on towns by Russo,[2] Speed,[3] or Loseby,[4] to cite but a few, provide important voices in this discussion. Other studies like that of Dark,[5] Gerrard,[6] or Faulkner[7] talk extensively about towns in the course of their arguments. Gavin Speed gives a fairly up-to date archaeological overview of particular sites.[8] He has attempted to show that the archaeological evidence for the urban transformations of 300-600 is more ambiguous than previously assumed. He has also made some important strides in trying to define the nature of urbanism in the late and post-Roman period. Nevertheless his work remains mired in methodological shortcomings and needs to be assessed carefully.[9] It remains steeped in the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy, sometimes veering into an ultracontinuist view.

One cannot say that there was no decline or that the urban infrastructures passed unscathed from Roman through sub-Roman to the Early Medieval period. But even though the decline of urban infrastructures was evident, it was not a catastrophic event but rather an exercise in adaptation.[10] Speed has calculated that only 17% of Roman urban sites show signs of no activity in the period after 450.[11] But what this activity actually was is a very different matter.

If we steer clear both from what James Gerrard has called 'pseudo-history'[12] and the paradigm of catastrophic collapse (one is inclined to cite Faulkner),[13] we can reconstruct a *probable* trajectory of Britain's urban spaces from the fifth to the seventh century. This is a difficult period to

2 Russo, *Town Origins and Development in Early England, c.400-950 A.D.*

3 Speed, *Towns in the Dark?*

4 Loseby, 'Power and Towns in Late Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon England', 319–70.

5 Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity, 300-800*.

6 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*.

7 Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*.

8 Speed, *Towns in the Dark?*, 18–97.

9 Gerrard, 'Towns in the Dark? Urban Transformations from Late Roman to Anglo-Saxon England. By G. Speed. Archaeopress, Oxford, 2014.'.

10 Statistics about the number of rooms occupied in Roman villas in Britain or calling any evidence of people performing Romanitas as 'bric-a-brac' proves suprisingly little, see: Faulkner and Reece, 'The Debate About the End', 59–76. Decline does not equal catastrophe. Adaptation is not a sign of the end of the world.

11 Speed, *Towns in the Dark?*, 137; Speed's methodology remains problematic.

12 Although he was maybe a bit too generous in applying that term, see: Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 3.

13 Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*.

assess in the British context, not least because of the amount of myths surrounding it. And so there will be no Arthurs here for a simple reason: There were most probably none.[14] They are also unnecessary for explaining the processes we are researching, and we should finally give the legendary hero a rest.[15]

The body of evidence is not as small as it is sometimes suggested; moreover, its archaeological component expands constantly, allowing for the inclusion of more and more elements of the textual source puzzle into their fitting places. Too often the 'urban space' of sub-Roman and Early Medieval England has been used as a 'weapon of mass argumentation' for both the catastrophists and the continuators. Instead of focusing on the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy, which often provides lists of 'cases' to prove respective points, we will try to form a narrative of the adaptation process with an open end, and without a teleological bias. As we shall see, there exists a possibility that the model of relationship with urban space in the Early Medieval period had immediate late- and sub-Roman origins.

Narrative sources in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods need to be approached with caution. But revisiting them, even the most problematic ones, like *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* by Gildas or *Annales Cambriae*, is necessary.[16] There is still much that can be learned from those sources if they are treated with a proper critical apparatus, viewed in the light of their historical context, and seen also in the light of the newest achievements in archaeology. Those sources cannot be read as a pure reflection of facts, but can be helpful in analysing and detecting attitudes and receptions of concepts and ideas. Particularly useful are, again, the charters, which are a still underappreciated and underused resource when it comes to tracing the Roman past in the Early Medieval period.

When it comes to the archaeological material for this chapter, particular caution has been given not to ask the archaeological sources questions they cannot answer, and especially not to use them to address the questions of ethnicity, linguistics, or affiliations known or assumed from written sources. Some significant advances in the archaeological source criticism have been achieved recently, and great care has been taken to implement

14 Higham, *King Arthur*; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*; Campbell, 'The Age of Arthur'.

15 Probably the strongest rebuttal was delivered by Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', 173–92. He was nevertheless perhaps too pessimistic in his general assessment of what can be known about sub-Roman Britain.

16 Such revisiting can be extremely helpful. It is enough to think about the discussion spurred by the 1984 Gildas volume, Lapidge and Dumville, eds., *Gildas: New Approaches*.

them here.[17] Recent years have brought a new generation of thinkers who have re-evalued both the theoretical framework in which the archeological evidence can be used to tell the narratives of post-Roman Britain[18] as well as highlighted the need to revise existing typologies.[19] Region-centred studies have shown that funerary archaeology is a necessary component in understanding the period, at the same time undermining the established view of a wave-like diffusion of an 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture from east to west and offering a new paradigm for a relationship between communities and their landscape.[20] Those studies make very clear that binary divisions are a product of the nineteenth century and that the process of adaptation is one characterised by hybridity. Instead of a simple, even simplistic, view of a hierarchical spread of practices, a more rhizomatic, horizontal model emerges. New broad syntheses of the archaeological and documentary material are literally rewriting the narratives of post-Roman Britain.[21]

One common element in this analysis is the high degree of regionalisation in post-Roman, Late Antique, and Early Medieval Britain. Models that might work for a single area, like Kent or the *territorium* of Chester, to mention two of the areas discussed here, will not work elsewhere. Early Medieval reality was, after all, regional and local.[22] This is important for two main reasons. First of all, regionality is yet another phenomenon in line with the developments in the wider post-Roman West.[23] Second, it shows how much caution must be advised in trying to apply particular models to the whole of post-Roman Britain. While it is relatively clear that some areas experienced a pronounced Late Antique phase, this was not uniform – neither chronologically nor in terms of its main characteristics. We can speak therefore not of 'transformation of the Roman world' here but of 'adaptations of the Roman worlds'. Just as there was a number of implementations of *Romanitas*, there was also a number of its adaptations.

The differences between regions had their origins not only in the particular local conditions (including the, methodologically problematic, notion of the level of Romanization) but also in the agents taking over Roman authority and state property. There was a plethora of modes in which this

17 Harland, 'Rethinking Ethnicity and ›Otherness‹'.
18 Harland, 'Memories of Migration?'
19 Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England*.
20 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*.
21 Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English*.
22 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 59, 185.
23 Wickham, 'Studying Long-Term Change in the West, a.d. 400-800', 383–403.

could occur, but the two main ones seem to be ecclesiastical and military.[24] In some (but by no means all) of those regions, these transformations seem to have occurred inside the framework of late Roman law – two aforementioned case studies of Chester and Kent will demonstrate such transitions into ecclesiastical and military hands respectively. This high degree of regionalisation puts into question any model that tries to propose a 'total' solution or one that operates over large swathes of land.

The processes described here were long-lasting and rooted already in processes seen in the third century. We will try to test the hypothesis that Roman urban infrastructure managed to exert its pull throughout the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, albeit sometimes in a delicate way. I am aware that the dates chosen to delimitate those periods are, by necessity, discretionary and in themselves present no indication of significant breaks or changes. They serve merely as mental anchors for processes that occur during their 'lifetime'.

2. Urban Spaces in the Sub-Roman Period (c. 382-c. 442)

2.1 Transformations of Roman Towns in Britain

When St Germanus of Auxerre visited Britain for the first time around 429, the situation and the society he encountered did not differ much from what he knew from Gaul. There were people of tribunician rank,[25] the extramural shrine of St Albans seemed to be intact[26] and a field church was being built 'instar civitatis', 'in the likeness of a city [church]'.[27] There have been doubts about the second visit,[28] but it seems that the only fact about it that can be put into question is its date, which seems to fall *c.* 435.[29] South-east Britain felt like a part of the (radically transforming) Roman Empire, one perhaps already moving a bit too fast for some Gaulish writers.

24 With civilian elements also playing a role to a certain extent in some regions, see: Petts, 'Military and Civilian', 314–35.

25 Constantius, 'Life of St Germanus', chap. XV.

26 Constantius, 'Life of St Germanus', chap. XVI.

27 Constantius, 'Life of St Germanus', chap. XVII. Germanus could have been responsible for providing directions, but it is unlikely that he built the 'leafy' church himself; it was built by local craftsmen.

28 Barrett, 'Saint Germanus and the British Missions', 214.

29 Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire and the End of Roman Britain'. For an overview of Germanus' visits, see: Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain*.

Change lies often in the eye of the beholder. If we take the beginning of the fifth century as pivotal in terms of the administrative framework, we will see the places which underwent this transformation later than others as 'continuities' – they will seem to have 'survived' longer. As Barbara Yorke writes, 'Constantius's *Life of St Germanus of Auxerre* suggests that in the 420s and 430s Britain could still appear to a visitor from Gaul as a basically Romanised province, an observation which is all the more interesting as the archaeological evidence suggests that a major transformation of many of the essential features of Romanised Britain had already taken place by that date'.[30] The dating of the *Life* has recently been contested but it seems to have been written between 460-470.[31] If so, its content might even reflect the tangible realities of Britain in the 460s or at least not be a jarring dissonance for its audience. This familiarity for observers from Gaul is easier to explain than it seems – first of all, this shows that the processes occurring in south-eastern Britain and in Northern Gaul show signs of similarity, and that the first half of the fifth century was still a period of late Roman transformation originating in the fourth century. Onomastic evidence is also on the side of this hypothesis. Old English city names often convey the idea of a defended place (seen well in such names like Colchester,[32] Gloucester[33] or the Old English name for St Albans, Verulamacæstir[34] and many others[35] – a concept that is late Roman and does not occur in other Germanic languages).[36] The process must have started already in the late Roman period and reflects late Roman transformations.[37]

30 Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Gentes and Regna', 399.

31 Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local Saints in Late Antique Britain', 115–16; Higham, 'Constantius, St Germanus and Fifth-Century Britain', 118.

32 Gelling, Nicolaisen, and Richards, 'Colchester'.

33 Gelling, Nicolaisen, and Richards, 'Gloucester'.

34 Gelling, Nicolaisen, and Richards, 'St Albans'; which is also an example of the reception of a Romano-British place name, see: Coates, 'Verulamium: The Romano-British Name of St Albans', 169–76.

35 Including: Alchester, Chesterford, Chichester, Cirencester, Dorchester, Grantacaestir (Cambridge), Ilchester, Porchester, Rochester, Silchester, Winchester and Ythancaestir (Bradwell on Sea?). See: Copley, *Archaeology and Place-Names in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, 118.

36 Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 223.

37 That Old English took from Latin in their place-names was not confined solely to the idea of defended places, see: Gelling, 'Latin Loan-Words in Old English Place-Names', 1–13. Gelling's view was unnecessarily pessimistic, as she assumed that Latin was not spoken widely in the sub-Roman period. We know now that indeed it might have remained a spoken language for much longer than has previously been assumed, see: Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*, 113–15; and Schrijver, 'What Britons Spoke around 400 AD', 165–71.

Place names in general tell a very interesting story of adaptation and loss of distinction. Previously it was assumed that because of the data that we have from the time of the drafting of the *Domesday Book* (1086) the place names in the East of Britain presented a stable, Old English, picture with very little borrowing from Latin or direct transmission from Roman place names. However, we know now, thanks to the analysis of place names in charters and narrative sources that this was not entirely the case. Around 31 to 35 per cent of the place-names attested before 731 are lost.[38] The chance of survival of the place names from the seventh and eighth centuries was then much lower than the ones from the time of the *Domesday Book* and many place names could have been borrowed and then lost in that period.[39] This shows that there seems to be a trend in which the loss of those borrowed names was gradual and, very importantly to our argument, that loss was slower in the case of more important, urban-related places.[40] This seems to fit well into the model of adaptation leading to a loss of distinction. The longer survival of place names in more important locations pointed out by Alaric Hall seems to show how the urban space through its importance could slow down the process. For the argument of this chapter the most important conclusion from the place name evidence is that in the fifth and sixth centuries the landscape would still be referred to through a linguistic matrix more or less recognisable to a visitor from the Continental part of the post-Roman West.

Unsurprisingly, when the *Life* was written, in the 460s/470s, such a description of Britain would not raise many brows. British, or those connected to Britain, ecclesiastics had numerous contacts with Gaul in the fifth century, with Faustus of Riez being the prime example. Of lay actors, Riothamus managed to cross to Gaul *c.* 469 in order to fight on Anthemius' side.[41] While this has been interpreted as evidence of strong pro-Roman feelings at least among part of the elite in Britain at the time, we should also ask what it tells us about the infrastructure. Riothamus needed to organise his forces but he also needed to ferry them to the other side of the Channel. If the 'visitors from Gaul' would recognise the cities we could hypothesise that Riothamus at least used part of the Roman road network or ports to move his forces to the coast and then on the other side.[42] Such examples, albeit

38 Hall, 'The Instability of Place-names', 109.

39 Hall, 'The Instability of Place-names', 111.

40 Hall, '*A gente Anglorum appellatur*'.

41 Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire and the End of Roman Britain', 261.

42 One can only speculate if he could have used the same route and used the same forts of *litus Saxonicum* as Roman forces did in the fourth century, see: Cotterill, 'Saxon Raiding and the Role of the Late Roman Coastal Forts of Britain', 239.

isolated in our source base, show a vested interest in the situation of the rapidly changing Western Roman Empire.

This seems to be hard to reconcile with the vision that towns in Britain after the third century were mere 'administrative villages [...] Mediterranean plants in foreign soil.'[43] Even though such view has been criticised we must remember that Romano-British urbanism indeed showed certain peculiarities from the third century onwards, especially when compared to Spain or Gaul.[44] One common feature also invoked in older scholarship is the difference of the extent of the urban area fortified by walls – much larger in Britain (tending to cover all of it) than in Gaul (tending to focus just on the city core).[45] As we shall see this might have had far-reaching consequences for the transformation of urban space. This peculiarity shows also that the notion of 'being Romanized' differed not only across various regions of the Roman West but also on a much smaller scale, between the *pagi*.

Adam Rogers has shown that the selected demolition and repurposing of public buildings in Late Antique British towns is consistent with that of Northern Gaul.[46] In that light, Christopher Arnold's claim that '[t]he number of examples of the fate of public buildings is as long as it is varied but none provide conclusive proof that they were being used for their original purpose throughout the fourth century, and many went out of use early in that century',[47] just shows that cities were going through a similarly intensive transformation as the Gaulish ones, with an increasing decline of the original functions of buildings inside the *fora* of cities like Leicester, Silchester, and Exeter in the late fourth century.[48] The acceleration of the change in their purpose and maintenance is then just another example of an adaptation strategy, within a particular British context.

Late Antique transformations did not originate in the upheavals of the first half of the fifth century, but were a late Roman phenomenon. The changes seen as a result of 'Roman withdrawal' (in light of the archaeological evidence and rereading of textual sources somewhat of a non-event) were just late Roman processes.[49] In fact the transition of Roman to Medieval as a socio-political and economical process can be seen to start during the

43 Reece, 'Town and Country: The End of Roman Britain', 78, 89–90.

44 Indeed it has been challenged on archaeological grounds, see: Rogers, *Late Roman Towns in Britain*, 117–29.

45 Butler, 'Late Roman Town Walls in Gaul', 48–50.

46 Rogers, *Late Roman Towns in Britain*, 112–16.

47 Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, 33.

48 Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 221.

49 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 6.

crisis of the third century, culminating in the increasing importance of the house of Wessex at the end of the ninth century.[50] In that sense, Britain is also 'just another' province of the post-Roman West,[51] with its own right to 'Late Antiquity'.[52] Although the term 'Late Antiquity' has been put into question as one which is not applicable to the British context, it still holds ground because it accurately represents the processes that originated in the late Roman period and their adaptative nature from a *longue durée* perspective.[53] Moreover, as in Gaul where the fates of towns were subject to great regional variation,[54] there was great regional variation in Britain.[55] This Late Antique phase was more pronounced in some regions than in others. We should be careful not to generalise on more than a scale of region, sometimes not even a *pagus*.

2.2 409/410 – the Year(s) Nothing Happened?

If we consider the 'long trajectories' of human material culture use, not much happened in the period surrounding the year 410 – it appears to us as a chimera, lacking the substance to maintain such a prominent place in history books. As noted by Hilary Cool, little changed around that date.[56] Even the traditional narrative about the army being withdrawn seems to crumble under the evidence of continuous occupation of Roman forts not only on the Hadrian's Wall like Housesteads, Birdoswald, South Shields, and Vindolanda[57] but also further south like in Piercebridge, where there are post-Roman wine amphora imports.[58] If evacuation indeed occurred it could be that it concerned just the *comitatenses* units and none, or almost none,

50 Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*, 122.

51 A sentiment which is finding a more and more sympathetic reception in the scholarship, see: Breeze, 'Two Roman Britains', 107–8. Although we should of course not treat it as a blanket statement ignoring the specifics of provincial life in Britain.

52 For a discussion on the 'right' of Britain to have Late Antiquity, see Collins and Gerrard, eds., *Debating Late Antiquity in Britain AD 300 – 700*.

53 Faulkner, 'The Case for the Dark Ages', 5–12.

54 Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul*, 75.

55 How fragmented the landscape of sub-Roman and Early Medieval Britain was can be seen in the example of different building traditions, which show a high degree of regional variation: Marshall and Marshall, 'Differentiation, Change and Continuity in Anglo-Saxon Buildings', 395–97.

56 Cool, 'Which "Romans"; What "Home"? The Myth of the "end" of Roman Britain', 20; Cool, 'The Parts Left Over: Material Culture into the Fifth Century', 47–65.

57 Collins, 'Military Communities and Transformation of the Frontier from the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries', 25.

58 Cool et al., eds., *Roman Piercebridge*, 308–9; Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 163.

of the *limitanei*. The troops in the forts seem not to have gotten the brief about any evacuation, as the archaeological record immediately after 410 shows.[59] Constantine III was fighting for the imperial throne and not trying to evacuate a province – at best some *comitatenses* left with him. Actually, the last usurpations of the Roman Britain were as imperial and as Roman as they could be in their goals.[60] Constantine, Gratian and Marcus were after the big prize, not some second-tier cup. There is little evidence of catastrophe in the abandonment of Roman towns in Britain. It is more a case of a steady but relentless dwindling, sometimes kept at bay. In fact, the fifth century may have been a period not of social stress but of relative ease.[61] 'The only difference after *c.* 409 was that soldiers were no longer paid or supplied through a centralised system. The small populations of the frontier troops and their families would still be in residence, however, and it is probable that in Periods 5 and 6 at Birdoswald we are seeing structural aspects of their response to the situation'.[62] Such circumstances might have been rooted in the ownership of landed property by the border troops, which we will discuss later.

This sequence of the 'significant dates' 410, 429, *c.* 435, *c.* 440 or 446 reflects more the concerns of Gallic writers than the reality of Britain.[63] Nowhere else is this more evident than in the urban context – if we keep in mind the 'Gallic lens' of many of our sources, we can better understand the purported significance of 410. They are not necessarily reflections of Romano-British sentiments.

A similar process can be seen on the example of the the rescript of Honorius. The document, informing the cities of Britain that they need to look after their own defence, and dated to 410, has been seen as the voluntary abandonment of the province by Rome, but at the same time it has caused significant controversy.[64] If this document, as Zosimos, our only source for its survival,[65] stated, was indeed directed to the 'cities of Britain'

59 'It is now reasonable to suggest that continued activity on such sites was the rule rather than the exception. Activity on military sites did not stop suddenly in the early fifth century. While there was some Roman troop withdrawal in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and a clear cessation of military pay arriving, the forts were not emptied', Petts, 'Military and Civilian', 319.

60 See: Drinkwater, 'The Usurpers Constantine III (407-411) and Jovinus (411-413)', 269–98.

61 Carver, Hills, and Scheschkewitz, *Wasperton*, 140.

62 Wilmott, ed., *Birdoswald*, 224.

63 Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire and the End of Roman Britain', 261–62.

64 Bartholomew, 'Fifth-Century Facts', 261–70.

65 Although it is possible that Gildas was aware of some form of imperial response that could have been the rescript itself, see: Wood, 'The Final Phase', 433.

and urged them to defend themselves,[66] and not towards the inhabitants of Bruttium,[67] it actually tells us close to nothing. Zosimos constructed the whole narrative of a revolt in Britain and the 'expulsion of the magistrates' to comment on and criticise the local politics of Constantinople – not even at the beginning of the fifth century but at its end. He might have used an actual document in which Honorius, being locked in Ravenna, brushes aside an appeal from the local authorities, temporarily reshuffling the command structure in the British provinces. What this document most emphatically does *not* prove is an end of Roman administration in Britain, a revolt of the *Bagaudae*,[68] or the Roman central government giving up its rights to Britain. The revolt is particularly unlikely since it has failed to impress fifth century writers.[69] The significance of 410 is owed solely to historical determinism and projection, a document that tells us more about early sixth century Byzantium's approach to its own past than about the political reality of late Roman Britain and that even if we assume that it speaks of Britain in the first place. Similarily the author of the anonymous *Narratio de imperatoribus domus Valentinianae et Theodosiane*, written between 423 and 450, sets the 'loss' of Britain among the list of failures of Honrius' reign, paralleling it with the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410.[70] The tone and purpose of this short work clearly concerns an appraisal of the emperors and not a description of the particularities of the British situation.

410 is a non-event; it is more a reflection of a need for an event than an actual historical marker. Its purported importance does not consider the fluid nature of the Roman territory in this period. Britain was not 'less' Roman in 411 than in 409. Even the penchant for producing usurpers seems to have continued if we allow ourselves to interpret Gildas 'superbus tyrannus' in that way. Crucial industries like textiles, salt, pewter or pottery continued to exist at least until the 450s.[71] In fact, the fifth and sixth centuries seem to have been an extremely peaceful period of British history[72] – the rural settlements are without exception undefended in the 'Anglo-Saxon' regions of Britain.[73]

66 Zosimus, *New History*, bk. IV.35.

67 Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain*, 461; for a defence of 'British identification', see Thompson, 'Zosimus 6. 10. 2 and the Letters of Honorius'.

68 Thompson, 'Britain, A. D. 406-410', 303.

69 Wood, 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels', 3.

70 'Narratio de Imperatoribus', 260–261.

71 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 106, 110–12, 114; Gerrard, 'Finding the Fifth Century'.

72 Previously assumed catastrophic events are now being reconsidered, showing dimishing evidence of 'Saxon massacres' occuring in Britain. Such a notion should be no longer be taken seriously, see: Darling, 'The Caistor-by-Norwich "Massacre" Reconsidered', 263–72.

73 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 57–59.

2.3 Candidates for Limited Urban Survival

In the classical narrative of continuity/discontinuity, a number of places have been put forward as possible candidates for limited urban survival in the fifth century. In 1967 Sheppard Frere proposed Canterbury, Dorchester-on-Thames, York, *Verulamium*, and Silchester as settlements that carried on as Roman towns.[74] To this list Wroxeter was added after Philip Barker's excavations.[75] Verulamium, which seemed one of the most promising, due to an extended sequence of late building activity, has been a subject to recent controversy.[76] In 2013, James Gerrard mentioned only Silchester and Wroxeter as possible places with later but not urban sequences.[77] Gavin Speed (employing a different and admittedly methodologically highly problematic measure – not applying any criteria but only looking for activity) saw some kind of occupation on 83% of former Roman urban sites in the period after 450.[78]

In the short-horizon approach a number of cities, including those mentioned by Gerrard and Frere, 'carried on' into the fifth century, but this should not be seen as either revolutionary or especially shocking. Those were the end tails of the late Roman transformation of cityscapes, and seeing them as 'survivors' depends almost wholly on assuming that 410 was a significant moment that marks a revolutionary change. In terms of production and continuity of their way of life, it is much more likely that it was not the big centres but the small towns that survived longest because ultimately they possessed a higher productive capacity.[79] Billingford, a roadside, undefended small town in the vicinity of Elmham, could be seen as one such example.[80] The early 'Saxon' activity at Heybridge, Essex, would be another.[81] Such a view has of course a lot to do with the way we

74 Frere, *Britannia: A History of Roman Britain*, 369.

75 See: Barker, ed., *The Baths Basilica Wroxeter*; Ellis, *The Roman Baths and Macellum at Wroxeter*; White and Dalwood, *Archaeological Assessment of Wroxeter*; with a critical reassesment of the evidence in Lane, 'Wroxeter and the End of Roman Britain', 501–15.

76 The original findings of Frere have been put into question: Neal, 'Building 2, Insula XXVII from Verulamium', 195–202; then defended in Frere and Witts, 'The Saga of Verulamium Building XXVII 2', 263–74; and then reassessed again, by trying to prove that the building in question was actually constructed not at the end of the fourth/beginning of the fifth century, but in the second century, see: Cosh and Neal, 'The Dating of Building 2, Insula XXVII', 65–90.

77 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 163–65.

78 Speed, *Towns in the Dark?*, 137.

79 Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 221.

80 Wallis, *Romano-British and Saxon Occupation at Billingford*.

81 Drury et al., 'An Early Saxon Settlement within the Romano-British Small Town at Heybridge, Essex', 1–40.

interpret archaeological findings at those sites. The nature of this 'survival' remains controversial as well; were those centres 'urban'? This is beside the point – they were *distinct* from other types of settlemetns and that is what made them important.

Moreover, this Britain of the first half of the fifth century was able to maintain some degree of *Romanitas* features usually connected with urban culture. St Patrick – if we follow the earlier chronology and date his death to *c.* 460[82] – still had plenty of time to be educated inside a framework that was essentially late Roman.[83] Additional points, can be derived from Michael Lapidge's and Andrew Breeze's arguments for a thoroughly Roman education of Gildas would place the availability of such an education at a later date.[84] A thought-provoking study by David Woods, binding the mystery cloud from Gildas to the similar event observed in Europe around 537,[85] would then show that such education was available in the area of Cirencester (if not more widely), at least until *c.* 500.[86] In that respect Britain was part of the wider Roman world that adapted to changing circumstances.

Why this departure from the paradigms of strict survival is important can be exemplified by analysing questions of political continuity. Its relevance to urbanism is paramount as it is based largely on the assumption of 'elite' survival in urban centres. According to Kenneth Dark it was made possible by a high level of Romanization of late Roman Britain, comparable with that of North Gaul or Spain, and an economic 'boom' in the early fifth century Britain due to the removal of the Roman tax burden.[87] Gerrard has already proven the political continuity of 'tribal' (*civitates*-based) organisation to be ahistorical.[88] There is also very little practical evidence on the ground for such large-scale surivals.[89] Tony Wilmott has shown with the example of York that sub-Roman urban centres were not strong enough to exert power over large territories (as

82 Wood, *The Missionary Life*; Dumville, 'The Death Date of St Patrick', 116.

83 On Patrick's education see also: Thompson, *Who Was Saint Patrick?*, 39–44.

84 Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education and the Latin Culture of Sub-Roman Britain', 27–50; Breeze, 'Gildas and the Schools of Cirencester', 131–38.

85 Woods, 'Gildas and the Mystery Cloud of 536–7', 226–34.

86 In the maximalist (and therefore perhaps too optimistic) view of Bernard Bachrach, Gildas' millieu was essentially Roman through and through, including a keen sense of Roman political and legal framework, see: Bachrach, 'Gildas, Vortigern and Constitutionality in Sub-Roman Britain', 126–40.

87 Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, 12, 68–69.

88 Gerrard, 215.

89 Draper, *Landscape, Settlement and Society*, 114.

shown by their distribution networks).[90] The survival of civilian elites is possible but we simply lack evidence of their extensive involvement in political life after the events of 441/442.[91] Moreover, the connection between this 'urban aristocracy' and the actual urban sites should be seen as mostly symbolic. The connections we see in the written sources might be equivalents of 'titular bishops' of the modern Roman Catholic Church, albeit on a slightly different level – the bishop resides far away from a long-abandoned see.

Late Roman Britain produced a large number of usurpers. Some, like Gratian at the beginning of the fifth century, are explicitly described as members of the urban aristocracy.[92] But their infrastructural base probably did not survive long after the 430s, and apart from a few sites was largely abandoned between 450-475 at the latest.[93] Therefore, it is hard to agree with a paradigm of a system of 'urban based' kingdoms in sub-Roman Britain. The 'small-horizon' (so occurring in the first half of the fifth century) transition phase in Britain is much more probable, and so is 'small-scale fragmentation'. Such communities could locally maintain and preserve elements of infrastructure necessary for their economic and political well-being, and might have performed important elements of *Romanitas* on their own, which would have been nearly impossible if attempted on a larger scale. Barbara Yorke has noted that although there is a correlation between the boundaries of post-Roman polities and territories '**broadly** [MF] comparable to those of the *civitates*',[94] most of the correlation can be found on the lower level of *pagi*, which supported smaller political structures, which can be seen in the use of the term *pagus* in charter S1784, 'in pago quæ dicitur Hæmele', in

90 Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, 230; See also: Ottaway, *Roman York* (Stroud, 2004), 149–52.

91 The chronology of which is generally derived from the last entry of the so-called Gallic Chronicle of 452: Burgess, 'The Gallic Chronicle of 452', 79. This entry initially generated scepticism, as being essentially invented by Mommsen, see: Miller, 'The Last British Entry in the "Gallic Chronicles"', 315; but was subsequently seen as genuine: Jones and Casey, 'The Gallic Chronicle Restored', 396. The enthusiasm of Jones and Casey has been seen as too far reaching by Burgess, 'The Dark Ages Return to Fifth-Century Britain', 192. Nevertheless this entry, if we take into account the circumstances in which it was written and transmitted, forms a useful reference point. For aspects of the manuscript transmission and relation to other chronicles, see: Wood, 'Chains of Chronicles', 67–78.

92 Paulus Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, sec. 7:40:4.

93 With an important geographical *caveat*: At that date there were of course no Saxons in what was to become Wessex, large portions of Mercia and central Northumbria, notwithstanding the fact that the whole paradigm of 'invasion' has to be urgently reassessed, see Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English*.

94 Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Gentes and Regna', 396.

Hertfordshire. The use of such terms does point towards a possible territorial survival on a very localised level.[95]

Larger units, following the former *civitates* territories, can be traced in some areas, most notably Circencester in the Hwicce territory, but it is more plausible to see them as new units coalescing later, as shown by fiscal and charter documents.[96] When under stress, polities are rarely able to maintain large-scale levels of unified organisation under similar rules as those observed at the beginning of a crisis. The fragmentation must have been relatively rapid and spanned maybe one generation after the 430s. A high level of political fragmentation can explain the significant differences in maintaining the use of, for example Roman urban sites across the former province. The roots of this process are already to be found in the Late Roman period.

The place-name evidence shows that a tribal political connection with towns is unlikely. Charles Thomas pointed out that Britain differs from other parts of the Roman West in respect of *dropping* the tribal name from surviving place-names: *Venta Belgarum* became Winchester,[97] as opposed to *Lutetia Parisorum* becoming Paris.[98] This has considerable consequences when we talk about cities. The paucity of artefact finds proves that 'total urbanism' and 'total continuity' are unlikely to be found in Britain of the fifth century, and probably not even in the last decades of the fourth. In other words, there was a large degree of economic, intellectual, and religious survival, but I posit that it occurred precisely because of large-scale fragmentation and on a low-level – in small regions, which followed their own trajectories.

The adaptation out of late Roman urbanism in Britain seems therefore to have occurred before the end of the fifth century. Nevertheless, certain functions, like classical education associated normally with the urban milieu, must have been available throughout the period. The symbolic attachement to cities seems to have survived that adaptation to a certain extent. Britain, in an uneven way, followed trajectories seen in Northern Gaul, and maybe even in parts of the Rhine valley. It presented an extreme

95 Bailey, 'The Middle Saxons', 111.

96 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce*, 75.

97 This Venta (of the three possible ones) might have been the site of the British gynaeceum, the state textile workshop, which might have also played a role in the survival of its name, showing how important infrastructure was for survival. For Bede only Winchester is Venta, see: Wild, 'The "Gynaeceum" at "Venta" and Its Context', 674–76.

98 Charles Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, 253.

case, but one which was still consistent with the broader processes of the Roman West, of adapting itself out of post-classical urbanism.

2.4 Coins and Urban Spaces

A connection has been made between the collapse of the coin economy and the fate of urban spaces in Britain, even to the extent of using the absence of post-fifth-century coins as a proof of total urban collapse.[99] But coin clipping, an Empire-wide phenomenon, was extremely widespread in late and post-Roman Britain.[100] Burnett sees this as evidence of a rapid decline of monetary economy. That is true for market coin exchange in terms of the scarcity of new issues available. But it also shows a particular attachment *to* the coin economy, which, as the supply of coins diminished, attained a more and more symbolic character. The cropping of coins might have been a much more widespread phenomenon at the beginning of the fifth century than previously thought, and their slow disappearance did not have to lead to an economic collapse.[101] Clipping is a particular form of attachement *to* the Roman heritage – the portrait of the emperor would always be kept intact in clipped coins.[102] Narratives can be cast not only in words but also in metal – the ever thinner ring of silver around the imperial portrait was a particularily vivid expression of a narrative of attachement.

The rare finds of Visigothic forged coins (the numbers that have been found are meagre compared to the estimated size of the monetary economy of late Roman Britain) show possible evidence of a low-intensity monetary economy, operating on old currency and limited accidental imports.[103] Examples from as far away as Vandal Africa show that coins could re-enter circulation centuries after the time a coin was struck.[104] There is tentative evidence that also in Britain, at least in the south-east, significant use of coins continued far into the fifth century by the re-use of older coins, clipping, and incidental imports.[105] Clipping could be used as a method to pay *foederati* with the limited and diminished supply from the Continent.[106] Coins were used and available probably throughout the period otherwise

99 Reece, 'The End of the City in Roman Britain', 139.
100 Burnett, 'Clipped Siliquae and the End of Roman Britain'.
101 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 81, 99.
102 Gaimster, 'Scandinavian Gold Bracteates in Britain: Money and Media in the Dark Ages', 6.
103 'Record ID: SF-17EB49 – ROMAN Coin'.
104 'MK-B | Vandalen in Nordafrika/Vespasianus 71-78 Bzw. Vor ca. 480/490'.
105 Williams, 'The Circulation, Minting, and Use of Coins in East Anglia, *c.* AD 580-675', 122.
106 See the diagram of coin re-use: Abdy, 'After Patching', 98.

considered to be a 'gap' between the Roman coin circulation and the reappearance of locally minted coinage.[107] This allowed for the abandonment of old distribution networks to be less sudden. Indeed, the analysis of coin supply in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall seems to point towards a relatively long period of re-use and circulation of coins from the Valentinianic and Theodosian issues, perhaps enabled by a significantly lower demand for coinage as such, a particular strategy of adaptation.[108]

The view that Roman Britain was devoid of coin imports after the imaginary collapse of 410 might be due to methodological decisions and the way our data is skewed towards hoards. Small denomination coins post-410 were sometimes not recognised, partly because they were found in a worn state – supporting the theory of bullion remaining in circulation for a long time. This has prompted a number of reassessments of old assemblages.[109] The discovery of the Patching hoard in 1997, with its last coin in sequence being a Visigothic solidus bearing the name of Libius Severus and dating to *c.* 461,[110] shows that coins were still imported to Britain at that date, although probably not as a principal payment method.[111] In other words, there might have been a flickering of a coin economy in the fifth century and the most Roman of its functions – a symbolical attachement to a distant ruler, giving the coinage legitimacy – was never totally abandoned. The audience for that attachement must have shrank considerably, but was nevertheless discernible.

We are mostly forced to rely on hoards, and they do not necessarily give us the full picture.[112] Fortunately a growing number of casual losses are being found. One such example, closely connected with Roman infrastructure – 8 bronze coins issued between 393 and 408 found in the vicinity of the Hadrian's

107 The richness of imported coin finds is visible especially on sites like Flixborough, with coins imported from Frisia found in the earliest, seventh century layers: Loveluck, 'Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption: Flixborough and Its Importance for Mid and Late Saxon Settlement Studies', 95–96. Although the excavator himself raised doubts if this was a place of exchange: Loveluck, *Rural Settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millennium AD*, 128, it seems highly unlikely that some form of trade activity did not take place at the site.

108 Brickstock, 'Coin Supply in the North in the Late Roman Period', 35–36.

109 Abdy, 'After Patching', 93.

110 White et al., 'A Mid-Fifth Century Hoard of Roman and Pseudo-Roman Material from Patching, West Sussex', 304–7.

111 Although the theory that the coins were imported almost solely for ornamental purposes seems too far fetched. Blackburn, 'Three Silver Coins in the Names of Valentinian III (425-55) and Anthemius (467-72) from Chatham Lines, Kent', 174–75; interestingly, the last coin in the sequence takes us right to the decade of Riothamus' activity.

112 Gold coinage remained mostly the domain of the elite, hence finds of smaller denominations are far more valuable in assessing the real role of coins in economy, see: Naismith, 'Gold Coinage and Its Use in the Post-Roman West', 273–306.

Wall and on the side of a Roman road – shows that bronze, small denomination coins remained in use after the 410s.[113] A small amount of *nummi* from the reigns of Honorius, Arcadius, Theodosius II and Valentinian III has been found in the context of former Roman urban spaces, but they are isolated finds.[114] What is nevertheless significant is that the true break in copper/bronze coinage appears to occur after *c.* 455 with the next copper coins resurfacing from the reign of Justin I (518-527), but in a different context.[115] Again it seems to support the notion that in terms of a real shift 410 was largely insignificant.

There *were* coin imports to Britain after 410, also of bronze, small denomination coins. They are rare, but when they appear there is an obvious link between them and Roman infrastructural remains (roads, urban spaces). Their function must have been transformed, since it is highly unlikely that their small numbers sustained a fully-fledged coin-based economy.[116] Their rarity might not reflect their significance in circulation. But a certain form of attachement to coins as a mode of payment persisted at least until the second half of the fifth century and at least some of the evidence for it is connected with former Roman settlements.

2.5 Problematising the Shift

We have seen that nothing of note occurred around the year 410, but that from the year 383 (the usurpation of Magnus Maximus) Britain began its slow 70-year-long process of transformation and adaptation away from a Roman province to a conglomerate of small successor-polities. Cities and urban centres were one of the most visibly changed elements. How can we then problematize this shift?

The shift, in which Roman urban spaces ceased to function primarily as cities, is essentially seen as part of a collapse.[117] This is a teleological view, in which a drop to a lower level of complexity is seen as an inherent sign of decline, necessitated by an inability to reap the benefits of the said complexity.[118] But towns did not exist in isolation – they depended

113 Collins, 'The Latest Roman Coin from Hadrian's Wall', 256–61.

114 Abdy and Williams, 'A Catalogue of Hoards and Single Finds from the British Isles, c. AD410–675', nn. 51 (close to Dorchester-on-Thames), 54 (Richborough/Rutupiae), 57 (Verulamium), 58 (Wroxeter), 60 (Verulamium), 61 (Richborough/Rutupiae).

115 Abdy and Williams, 'A Catalogue of Hoards and Single Finds from the British Isles, c. AD410–675', n. 83 (Meols, Merseyside).

116 Moorhead and Walton, 'Coinage at the End of Roman Britain', 113–14.

117 Compare Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*.

118 Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, 151, 202–3.

on the hinterland and on the long-distance market. The way in which the rural landscape was worked remained essentially unchanged between the prehistoric and Early Medieval periods.[119] The open field system (long associated with the post-*Adventus Saxonum* type of agriculture) seems to have originated way before the Early Medieval period.[120] Specialists and researchers seem even to be eager to use the word 'continuity' when talking about the rural economy, and they have good grounds for doing so.[121]

What about urbanism, which does not exhibit such signs? First of all, Roman Britain was overwhelmingly rural, so that what we perceive as a momentous change might have not been seen as such by the contemporaries.[122] This rural 'perspective' much influenced the way urbanism in Roman Britain looked.[123] If we try to approach the Roman city as a 'superstructure', one can say that in its late, post classical form, it was simply ill-suited to the circumstances and characteristics of sub-Roman Britain. It required resources that the small polities could not muster, and the benefits that it gave (mostly economical – giving access to a large exchange network and providing a strong node for the local economy) could not be fully reaped in a state of limited governance; moreover, those functions (including long-distance trade, as the examples of extremely vivid trade contacts of places like Cadbury Castle or Tintagel demonstrate) could be fulfilled in a much more cost-effective way through multi-focal arrangements.[124]

Probably the key case-study for how this open-ended transformation could manifest itself in a para-urban form is West Heslerton in North Yorkshire.[125] This settlement, with a large cemetery, shows features of a place that escapes

119 Oosthuizen, 'Recognizing and Moving on from a Failed Paradigm', 185.

120 Oosthuizen, 'Anglo-Saxon Fields', 377–401.

121 Oosthuizen, 'Recognizing and Moving on from a Failed Paradigm', 209.

122 The agrarian aspect of the Roman Empire tends to be downplayed, in part because the level of urbanisation was probably unmatched until the Early Modern period. This has sometimes led to false analogies, perceiving the Roman economic system as akin to a capitalism-like network. One of the theoretical frameworks put forward to deal with this problem was the concept of 'Roman Bazaar' – an economy that remains market driven but is much dependent on the rural agricultural production and tributary systems. Many models of the end of the Roman Empire in the West are going to be inadequate, because they start with a false premise: They assume that the Roman economic system was capitalist (or at least proto-capitalist). See: Peter F. Bang, *The Roman Bazaar*, 32–36; 61–128.

123 Taylor, 'Roman Urbanism', 413–32.

124 Alcock, Stevenson, and Musson, *Cadbury Castle, Somerset*; Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*. And the recent, as yet not published, results of excavations in Tintagel from the season 2017.

125 Powlesland, Haughton, and Hanson, 'Excavations at Heslerton'; Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*.

the rigid definitions of what is 'urban' and what is 'rural'. It shows a baffling but nevertheless significant number of imports of high-quality glass fragments (that perhaps ended there through some form of redistribution), which, together with its craft production, may point to it being above the economical level of sustenance.[126] While it is not a place of continuity of settlement (it was built around a Late Roman ritual site) it is a place of re-use of infrastructure – in this case religious. The isotope analysis of the skeletons from the site is inconclusive but shows nevertheless a mixture of both local and incoming population (both from across the Pennines and the North Sea), while completely lacking any evidence of the place being overtaken by a military elite of immigrants.[127] Most importantly it exhibits what Powlesland has termed 'zoning' – the division of a settlement into specialised spaces devoted to housing, agricultural production and crafts.[128] The northern part was divided into a 'craft zone' and 'housing' zone by a stream, while the southern part, centered around a spring, contained an 'agricultural processing' zone and a 'multi-function' zone.[129] And yet, West Heslerton was not a town. It is highly unlikely that it was intended to be one, although it not only exhibits some functions of a town (trade, production above sustenance, possibly a central place), but also some features like an organised – although not linear – layout. It exemplifies the open-ended, local adaptation of the Late Roman landscape and infrastructure. This is the shift from a reliance on Roman-style urban centres to multifocal arrangements in the making. West Heslerton, even if modest in scale, is ambitious in its execution.

Another case study, but this time with a different set of evidence, is Dorchester-on-Thames. It was a 'small town' of Roman Britain that grew up from a *vicus* next to a fort, with the beginning of the occupation dating probably to the middle of the second century.[130] The town remained small,

126 Broadley, 'The Vessel Glass Assemblage from Anglo-Saxon Occupation at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire', 31.

127 Montgomery et al., 'Continuity or Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England? Isotope Evidence for Mobility, Subsistence Practice, and Status at West Heslerton', 123; See, in this context, the debate about the 'apartheid-like' structure of early Anglo-Saxon England: Woolf, 'Apartheid and Economics in Anglo-Saxon England', 115–129. The jury is still out on this theory but weighting the available evidence shows that we should be careful when employing it as a paradigm: Pattison, 'Is It Necessary to Assume an Apartheid-like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England?', 2423–29; Thomas, Stumpf, and Harke, 'Evidence for an Apartheid-like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England', 2651–57.

128 Powlesland, 'West Heslerton: Aspects of Settlement Mobility', 23.

129 Powlesland, 'West Heslerton: Aspects of Settlement Mobility', 22–25.

130 Burnham and Wacher, 'Dorchester-on-Thames', 117–18.

but it was located at a strategic node of four Roman roads: towards Silchester, towards Henley (which joins with the main London-Silchester road), towards Aston Clinton, and Akeman Street (a major east-west route).[131]

A series of excavatons has revealed rich late and sub-Roman material. Inside the walled space there is a masonry building dating from the early fifth century.[132] Additionally a number of coins from the early fifth century were found inside the town[133] as well as a *nummus* of Arcadius or Honorius close to the town.[134] A number of *Grubenhäuser* have been found inside, some of which respect the old Roman city grid, hinting at early signs of adapatation and transformation.[135] The cemeteries outside the city show the presence of a varied population,[136] but perhaps the most interesting are the military burials from the late and sub-Roman periods showing the use of Continental equipment, which might hint at the presence of *foederati*[137] or, more probably, at a reception of the latent military fashions of the late Empire.[138]

Crucial is also the relation of Dorchester-on-Thames to Silchester. The line of Silchester Dykes, facing towards Dorchester-on-Thames, was seen in earlier scholarship as a line of defence of the Romano-British enclave against the transformed (for they did not have to be new) inhabitants of the former Roman town.[139] Silchester is one of the urban spaces exhibiting continuity of occupation until perhaps the sixth,[140] if not seventh century,[141] and the

131 Malpas, 'Roman Roads South and East of Dorchester-on-Thames', 23–34.

132 It was found overlying a worn coin of Honorius from the issue of 394-395: Frere, 'Excavations at Dorchester on Thames, 1962', 121–23.

133 Frere, 'Excavations at Dorchester on Thames, 1963', 100.

134 It is an anomalous issue, with no parallels elsewhere in Britain: Abdy and Williams, 'A Catalogue of Hoards and Single Finds from the British Isles, *c.* AD410–675', n. 51.

135 Bradley, 'Rescue Excavation in Dorchester on Thames 1972', 38.

136 For excavation reports, see: Harman et al., 'Roman Burials around Dorchester-on-Thames', 1–16; Chambers, 'The Late- and Sub-Roman Cemetery at Queenford Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames', 35–70.

137 Booth, 'A Late Roman Military Burial from the Dyke Hills, Dorchester on Thames, Oxfordshire', 268–69.

138 On why such costume and equipement might be an example of a particular way of dealing with the idea of 'Romanness', see: Harland, 'Rethinking ethnicity'.

139 Burnham and Wacher, 'Dorchester-on-Thames', 122.

140 Clarke and Fulford, 'The Excavation of Insula IX, Silchester', 163–64. It could have also been a site of a late-Roman church: Ford, 'The Silchester Church: A Dimensional Analysis and a New Reconstruction', 119; but recent investigations of the mosaic pavement found at the structure show that the building could date from the second century, which precludes such a possibility: Cosh, 'A Possible Date for the Silchester Roman "Church"', 229.

141 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 114.

coin finds point out that some sort of monetary exchange took place there in the early fifth century.[142] Those two 'continuities' might have engaged in a kind of power struggle for the neighbouring region. But again, the occupation of Dorchester-on-Thames, like West Heslerton, is not urban in nature and its most tangible evidence comes from Poundbury at its outskirts.[143] Although there is a clear continuity of settlement and even, considering the monetary economy, perhaps the elusive 'handshake' between the late Roman and sub-Roman worlds, it is also a place of significant, open-ended transformation. There is also absolutely no need to pitch those two centres against each other as 'outsiders' and 'locals'. They could have been simply two groups that adapted out of the late Roman situation in differing ways. They could have represented two, very local, interpretations of Romanness, with varying degrees of distinction. The relationship between Dorchester-on-Thames and Silchester, merely 40 kilometers apart, is an example of the extremely regionalised trajectories of adaptation.

The success of this transformation depended on the ability to re-use Roman infrastructure. Both the walled urban space and the extensive Roman road network nearby played a role. It is no coincidence that when St Birinus, a native of Francia and the first bishop in Wessex, received his see, he received Dorchester-on-Thames from Cynegils *c.* 634.[144] He was buried there, and only later was his body transferred to Winchester.[145] This transfer could reflect the geography of power of Wessex and the shoring up of resources in Winchester, which was also a former Roman town.[146] Dorchester-on-Thames and the story of its bishopric is a good example of the shift in the way urban space was treated as a resource. Materiality and re-use here play a major role, but later the symbolic aspect also becomes important.

Some of the interpretative conundrums connected with perceiving this shift not as a decline but as a transformation of governance and use of resources are due to the way we see the later Roman Empire itself. It was not only a conquest war-machine even if the Roman army and

142 Fulford et al., 'A Hoard of Late Roman Rings and Silver Coins from Silchester, Hampshire', 229.

143 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 116.

144 Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 38.

145 HE bk. III.7.

146 There is growing evidence that the church of SS Peter and Paul where he was interred was built in his lifetime. Its structure seems to be influenced by North Italian style, see: Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Winchester: From Venta to Wintancaestir', 207–8. It should be read in the context of the importance of Winchester as a former Roman urban space. In light of such evidence one should see Birinus' activity as similar to the earlier activities of the Augustinian mission.

state were closely intertwined; there is little doubt that large, organised military and the bureaucracy connected to it were two of the crucial elements of urban life's *raison d'être*. The military burials from the late and sub-Roman Dorchester-on-Thames are a transformed reflection of this. But at the same time the period spanning the late third to the early fifth century was fluid in nature and in the light of recent studies, like those of Woolf[147] or Gerrard[148] the idea of what was Romano-British went through a substantial mutation and further regionalisation. The 'collapse' exists only in a phenomenological isolation. Focusing chiefly on the material culture precludes the possibility of seeing towns as performing part of their function on a non-material level. Rogers has recognised this in the late Roman period as a 'meaningful place'.[149] This is perhaps methodologically unwieldy, so I would instead call it a symbolic governance resource. As the example of Dorchester-on-Thames shows, this machine also managed (in a regionalised context) to shift its relationship with the urban space and its infrastructure.

Eschewing first the elements of urban character and then the constant use and urban-style occupation of Roman towns in Britain was, if such a statement can be permitted in a work of history, a smart choice. It was a governance asset that just did not yield the expected results. But at the same time, one cannot frame it as a 'collapse'.

Late Roman Britain at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century was a surprisingly peaceful place. There are no 'deposits of human remains associated with warfare and conflict from late Roman or early post-Roman Britain'.[150] Even highly militarised zones like Hadrian's Wall seem to have been largely unaffected.[151] Cities were still maintained by Roman administration until the end of the fourth century; in places like Winchester, Lincoln, Gloucester, and Cirencester streets were still re-surfaced.[152] This stands in stark contrast with areas such as Gaul, and points towards a gradual shift in the case of post-Roman Britain.

The case of towns has been, similar to the case of rural landscape, a hostage of a failed paradigm, which assumed a narrative of collapse, based on a certain distrust towards written sources, and unduly focused on the 'academic focus on archaeologically recoverable items such as pottery,

147 Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', 360.
148 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*.
149 Rogers, 'Late Roman Towns as Meaningful Places', 57–81.
150 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 64.
151 Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, 225.
152 Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, 38.

jewellery and other forms of material culture'.[153] It presumed an ethnic shift, an influx that was supposed to change society on a broad scale, which might be difficult or impossible to assert.[154] This paradigm has failed to acknowledge the deep regionalisation and fragmentation of the late Roman West, and therefore assumed the same level of violence and militarisation in Britain as on the Continent.

This shift in function, occupation and usability of urban spaces was therefore not enacted in the face of destruction, change of culture, and general abandonment of 'Roman' ways.[155] It was a process – one which lasted, let us not forget, over 70 years and possibly longer; a minimum of three generations, the same length of time that separates the end of World War II from today – enacted by a society that was essentially late Roman, in the particular circumstances of Britain. Adaptation, sometimes radical, did not need to be preceeded by desertion or collapse. This society re-evaluated the city as a resource and used it in different, for them more productive ways than the ones prevalent under direct Roman administration.

Wolf Liebeschuetz has written that 'the weakness of British cities and British Christianity evidently interrelate, but it is impossible to say which caused the other'.[156] There is much in this statement that rings true as the fates of these two were interrelated. In truth, the full impact of Christianity on urban spaces in Britain is largely lost to us. We know from Gaul that its impact on towns was significant but slow.[157] We can only speculate if a similar dynamic was present in Britain; if it was, the towns ceased to function in their original roles too early to leave significant clues in archaeological or written records.

British ecclesiastical organisation was not completely detached from cities. In places like Chester or Lincoln, there is strong evidence that bishops of the *civitates* could play a major role.[158] But such practice might have been far from widespread. Mansuetus, 'bishop of the Britons' (i.e., most probably Britons settled in Armorica, although it is also possible that he was a 'visiting bishop' coming from Britain),[159] and present at the council of Tours in 461, was not described as a bishop of a particular *civitas*. He also signed the

153 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 99.

154 Harland, 'Deconstructing Anglo-Saxon Archaeology'.

155 'Not a bang but a whimper,' as put by Ottaway quoting T.S. Eliot: Ottaway, *Archaeology in British Towns*, 109–19.

156 Liebeschuetz, 'The End of Ancient City', 15.

157 Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul*, 78.

158 Green, 'The British Kingdom of Lindsey', 1–43.

159 *Concilia Galliae*, 146.

documents of the council last, which means he was either junior to all present or was not attached to a city.[160] This reflects of course the reality of Britons in Armorica being a separate group of immigrants, but it might also show that *before* they emigrated their ecclesiastical organisation was already becoming detached from the network of *civitates*. Therefore, Christianity started in Roman Britain like everywhere else, and its detachment from cities was a result rather than a cause of failing urbanism. Being responsible for emigrants led to Manusetus being not a bishop of a city but a bishop of a people, *in gentibus*.

The reasons must then lie in the late Roman period, in the changing nature of Roman cities in Britain, being less urban organisms and more vehicles of Roman (or, in some places, Church) administration and economy and bases for the military. The inability of the Roman state throughout the first half of the fifth century to respond to the needs of the authorities still based in Roman centres (as opposed to the Church machinery, which at least sent Germanus of Auxerre in 429) must have weakened them even further. Nevertheless, they remained, as they were in the late Roman period, symbolic governance resources. When the Roman administration ceased to support the functioning of cities in their administrative capacity, their survival became a calculation. What functions could be useful were maintained, and those which were not – and dense occupation in orderly plots was definitely something that was not useful – were abandoned.

This world in adaptation was capable of a significant cultural output. Our problem is that much of it is lost to us. Immediately post-Roman strata in villas were often ignored or not properly excavated. Artefacts that could come from the second part of this vigorous adaptation period might have been dated earlier simply because of a very broad chronological frame of comparison for them. Recent excavations in Chedworth have shown that skilled mosaic artists were active in Britain after the 430s.[161] This makes claims that high quality (if provincial in style) manuscript illuminations like the ones in *Vergilius Romanus* B.A.V. Cod. Vat. lat. 3867 could indeed have been produced in Britain increasingly likely.[162] Therefore, even though the economic decline and the process of adapting out of many markers of

160 Mathisen, 'Barbarian Bishops and the Churches "in Barbaricis Gentibus" During Late Antiquity', 667.

161 Papworth, 'The 5th Century Chedworth Mosaic'. The sheer amount of what we have learned about the post-Roman period in Britain in the final phases of this book's writing and editing might suggest that many discoveries are still to be made and many a dating revised.

162 Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain*, 126.

Roman life are impossible to deny, this was not as an abrupt process as previously assumed.

The late Roman period, which based on the degree of transformations and textual mentions that are blurry and problematic, ended in the mid-fifth century, was characterised by a shift in the use of urban space.[163] The fact that it took relatively long before this shift was completed may be ascribed to a certain degree to the presence of pro-imperial parties in Britain. They might have hoped for closer links with the empire, and saw putting some of their limited resources into maintaining overt examples of such hopes like city residences (e.g., the case of Wroxeter) to be worthwhile.[164] But those attempts were soon forsaken. The most visible result of that shift was that urban space ceased to be a city in the classical sense.

3. Urban Spaces in the Pre-Conversion Period (c. 442-597)

3.1 Tax-Gathering and Re-Use of Roman Towns

There were a number of ways in which former Roman urban space could be utilised by post-Roman societies and polities in Britain. As Barbara Yorke has noted, 'basic infrastructure of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was inherited from late Roman or sub-Roman Britain', and the examples shown here illustrate that this was indeed the case.[165] Those polities did not come out of nothing. This is also why the very name of this period, 'pre-conversion', lies uneasy on the page. Christianity has never completely disappeared from Britain.

Our understanding of the gathering of tax as an activity in this period relies chiefly on the study of Gildas. The problem is, that *The Ruin of Britain* is not a work of historical narrative but, first and foremost, a work of moral theology that harks back to Britain as it is imagined by its author and not necessarily as it really was.[166] The attempts to reconstruct precise narratives and chronologies of sub-Roman Britain from Gildas' writing – which is essentially an elaborate exercise in homiletic nostalgia – are futile and

163 Muhlberger, 'The Gallic Chronicle of 452 and Its Authority for British Events'; Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire and the End of Roman Britain', 261–62.

164 Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', 363.

165 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 8.

166 His portrayal of Britain as a 'bride' and use of complicated theological terminology impacts directly the value of his work for historiography, see Garcia, 'Gildas and the "Grievous Divorce from the Barbarians"', 243–53.

such narratives were certainly not the aim of the author. But Gildas' education[167] and level of Latin[168] allows us to look closely and analytically into the terminology he uses, present in his work as a by-product of that education and linguistic agility. Even a sermon can be analysed in this way. There are, essentially, three possibilities when we talk about Gildas and the remains of the Roman administrative system:

– Gildas knew what he was writing about when using the terms *annona*[169] and *cives*,[170] and had a full understanding and experience of the Roman legal terminology at *first hand*.
– Gildas knew all the terms and understood their meaning in their Roman administrative context but he had learned them at *second-hand*, through his education or texts that were available to him.
– Gildas had learned them at *second-hand* and had no real understanding of their practical application – passages where he happens to use them in their correct context are copied from other sources.

Scholars before have brought up this problem – not surprisingly much depends on how Gildas understood these terms.[171] Essentially, options one and two would mean that the events that he is describing occurred in the Roman context with at least vestiges of those institutions intact. The third option would mean that those institutions were just a distant memory, preserved in the sources available to Gildas, and he retroactively cast the relations with what he described as migrating peoples into such a context.

The third option seems to be highly unlikely. Although Gildas was reserved about calling himself 'Roman' and seems to, in both lay and religious terms, hold a bit of a grudge towards Roman power, he nevertheless appears to cherish some elements of performing *Romanitas*.[172] He seems to be aware of certain traditional signs that can be connected with the

167 Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education and the Latin Culture of Sub-Roman Britain'; Breeze, 'Gildas and the Schools of Cirencester', 136–38, although the identification of his place of education as Cirencester has to be approached with caution – it relies on a late source and an (almost) purely philological argument.

168 Gildas' Latin is difficult, but of good quality. He exhibits the knowledge of major rhetorical and metrical techniques and can be playful in his composition. The structural analysis of his text reveals an author of sensibilities that are, to put it mildly, not immediately evident from its content, see: Howlett, 'Continuities from Roman Britain', 175–76, 185.

169 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other works*, chap. 23.

170 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other works*, chap. 20.

171 Ryan, 'That "Dreary Old Question": The Hide in Anglo-Saxon England', 218–19.

172 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 82; O'Sullivan, *The De Excidio of Gildas: Its Authenticity and Date*, 78.

performance of *Romanitas* (e.g., wine drinking).[173] Why would he then have tried to present this conflict in Roman administrative terms if it did not fully serve his agenda? Moreover, why would he do so in an overtly moralistic work, which is, to put it mildly, rather thin on historic details, where the last thing that he was concerned with would be the intricacies of state payments?

If so, we are left with the first two options. Both options imply elements of Roman fiscal systems were in existence *c.* 450. That is actually less surprising than we are led to believe and would make perfect sense in the 'short horizon' sub-Roman Britain. What poses serious problems is the first option.

First of all, we need to, if not settle, than at least take a stand in the dispute about the dating of Gildas.[174] David Woods' study appears to link at least one recension (perhaps not the first) of *De Excidio* with the natural phenomenon of a cloud covering the sun and moon in 537.[175] Keeping a pessimistic point of view in mind, one can be convinced by Karen George's arguments pointing to the first redaction being produced between 510-530;[176] David Dumville's mid-sixth century dating appears then to be too late.[177] That gives us a spectrum encompassing roughly 510-540,[178] which would make the first option a rather revolutionary statement.

Essentially both options open up a thin possibility of an arrangement similar to what Walter Goffart proposed was present on the Continent at a slightly later period – a tax payment that would relatively quickly mutate into landownership.[179] We do not have to be too optimistic about the survival of a monetary economy into the 450s as in the late Roman context *annona militaris* was already collected in kind, and the whole context of supplying it to the incomers implies food deliveries.[180] For example, on Hadrian's Wall local grain supply had already replaced long-distance supply by around 360.[181]

173 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, chap. 7; Green, *Trade, Gift-Giving and Romanitas*, 10.

174 See: Higham, *The English Conquest*, 118–45.

175 Woods, 'Gildas and the Mystery Cloud of 536–7'.

176 George, *Gildas's De Excidio Britonum and the Early British Church*, 125.

177 Dumville, 'Gildas and Maelwyn: Problems of Dating', 51–60.

178 Which, interestingly enough, seems to put us back to the time of the chronological speculations of Stevens, almost eighty years old, see: Stevens, 'Gildas Sapiens', 370–71.

179 Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, 206–30. Important to note that this is just one of the ways in which the land could have been acquired. There is no single 'system' to explain the patterns of settlement and land ownership in post-Roman West. For a good discussion of this topic, see Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations,* 425-448

180 Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire, AD 235-395*, 90.

181 Wilmott, 'The Late Roman Transition at Birdoswald and on Hadrian's Wall', 17.

Cities played a role in such distribution.[182] More precisely, we are dealing with the administrative machinery associated with cities.[183]

The Roman tax infrastructures were clearly adapted intensively in post-Roman Britain. In the early 1960s, Herbert Finberg put forward a thesis that essentially the Roman land tax, *tributum*, could have survived the 'change of authority' from Roman to local and became part of a revenue system available to British successor kings.[184] In the north communities of *limitanei* still had the ability to extract tax.[185] If we assume that this was indeed the case, at least in the 'short-horizon', that would give stronger credibility (although not ultimate proof) to Gildas' correct use of terms, by showing that at least some elements of the Roman taxation system were able to survive. We know that already in the late Roman period – at least from the time of Valerian – the *annona* was subcontracted to private suppliers in what we could describe as a public-private partnership.[186] This had given it a greater chance of surviving the slow unravelling of Roman state bureaucracy. Such a survival should not strike us as impossible or fantastical. In fact, in Early Medieval Kent the land was assessed in ploughlands (*sulungs*) which was a form of survival of the Roman taxation system on yokes (*iuga*).[187] Similar continuities can be seen in Wales in the case of *uniciae* as forms of land measurement.[188] We see then that on the one hand the conversion of tax payments into kind was a perfectly normal late Roman phenomenon and on the other the infrastructures allowing for its calculation and collection were present at least vestigally in Early Medieval Britain.

Although urban spaces as points of reference were a part of the political and economic landscape, cities (in the Roman sense) were no longer there in the 450s, so this discussion has usually been framed by looking at the origins of the hide, a land unit.[189] The hide is seen either as an import, with

182 Durliat, 'le salaire de la paix sociale dans les royaumes barbares (Ve-VIe siècles)', 21–72; although strongly criticised by Liebeschuetz, 'Cities, Taxes and the Accomodation of the Barbarians', 135–41.

183 In Bachrach's view, serving here as a maximalist counterpoint, this administrative machinery would be still understood in the time of Gildas, see: Bachrach, 'Gildas, Vortigern and Constitutionality in Sub-Roman Britain.'

184 Finberg, *Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England*, 8.

185 Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, 228.

186 *The Codex of Justinian*, bk. IV.65.14.

187 Sawyer, *The Wealth of Anglo-Saxon England*, 44.

188 Davies, 'Unciae: Land Measurement in the "Liber Landavensis"', 119.

189 Which in the British context has sometimes been seen as developing independently from Roman tradition and connected with Irish influences, see: Charles-Edwards, 'Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide', 4–5.

its roots in common tradition predating the Roman times and maybe even Roman influence; or simply as being an adaptation of Roman *centuria* in the new realities.[190] If this is to hold true in the British context, the use of cities as an institution must have been an object of a particular kind of re-use. Cities might have been used symbolically as a reference point, and their territories could play a role in tax extraction. There are significant arguments that also the later West Saxon, Mercian or Kentish administrative districts might have had their origin in the Roman period, and that they were used as taxable units in the fifth and sixth centuries.[191] Their survival was possible thanks to a large-scale regionalisation and fragmentation. This could be indirectly evidenced in the survival of the -wicham place names.[192] The role of Roman urban and settlement infrastructure in those adaptations becomes clearer.

Are we not going too far? Wolf Liebeschuetz has criticised both Goffart's and Durliat's theories in a Continental context.[193] Here, we would have to not only accept these theories but also apply them in a situation outside the sphere of influence of central Roman administration. Essentially, we would assume that Romano-Britons were copying imperial practice and applying it in some form on their own. As much as this remains an interesting prospect, it hinges virtually on one much contested and difficult to interpret passage from a writer famed for his obscurity. If it has been difficult to prove and defend Goffart's tax theory on the Continent it is even more difficult to do so in the insular context. Nevertheless, town institutions might have played a role at the beginning of this process, even though the towns themselves had fallen into physical decline.

Gildas also seems to distinguish between *reges* and *iudices*.[194] To what extent this is a rhetorical matter or a reflection of actual terms is debatable – the highly moralistic tone of the fragment 'reges habet britannia, sed tyrannos; iudices habet, sed impios' might imply that it is a purely moralistic element with strong Biblical connotations. It has been pointed out that this terminology might ultimately derive not from Roman legal practice but from the Old Testament.[195] This interpretation, however, does not preclude the possibility that the fragment simultaneously represents a remnant of a legal distinction. Paul Schaffner has put

190 Barnwell, 'Hlafaeta, Ceorl, Hid and Scir', 53–54.
191 Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Gentes and Regna', 397.
192 Gelling, 'English Place-Names Derived from the Compound Wīchām'.
193 Liebeschuetz, 'Cities, Taxes and the Accomodation of the Barbarians'.
194 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, chap. 27.
195 Jones, 'The Legacy of Roman Law in Post-Roman Britain', 64.

forward the notion that *iudex* could be a magistrate, elected by the elders of the region.[196] If that distinction holds true and if this office indeed evolved from the Roman office of a magistrate, it is hard to imagine the institution of *iudices* wasn't connected in its origin with previous town administration; yet another 'survival' of Roman urbanism, and re-use of its tradition in a non-physical sense and in an unlikely place. Such usage is known from the inscription custom in the West of Britain, where at least the titles connected with the urban offices are present in Early Medieval inscriptions. The key to this passage is that it could be both; a reflection of Roman practice through Old Testament terminology in a work of moral theology.

Gildas seems therefore to be referencing the Roman taxation system in the midst of its adaptation process. The terms, offices and infrastructure connected to this system where in his time already becoming vestigial, but their meaning (and the ability to use them in a moral, homiletic work with an unspecified but probably broad audience) seems not to yet have died out. There is little to be gained from preaching with terms that make no sense to anyone in your audience. In fact, the survival of the land units and the importance attached to urban-connected titles in inscriptions shows that this process was not abrupt and that it presented a relatively slow adaptation of existing Roman infrastructures.

3.2 Limited Urban Functions and the Idea of Multifocal Governance

Inside the 'grey zone' of the fifth and early sixth centuries, some places might have retained the ability to perform limited urban functions – i.e., they stopped being 'cities' but still provided space for a limited set of services normally associated with urbanism. For example, in places like Silchester the site of the city basilica was converted to a productive site with small-scale metalworking occurring there over 150 years after year 400.[197] Ilchester could have been a market place for the local community in the fifth and sixth centuries.[198] Some minor installations like corn-drying ovens have been found in places like Verulamium.[199] These examples lasted relatively long but we can only date and analyse the most prominent ones because

196 Schaffner, 'Britain's Iudices', 151–55; Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', 366.
197 Fulford, Timby, and Allen, *Late Iron Age and Roman Silchester*, 72–74.
198 Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*, 130.
199 Frere, 'Verulamium and Canterbury: Continuity and Discontinuity', 190.

the dating is done almost solely through coinage, and the lack of significant imports of post-Theodosian coins precludes us from understanding how far into the fifth century these sequences stretch.[200]

But *something* is happening at many of these places, even though the activity is pronouncedly low-key and focuses on delivering particular *functions*, and not on maintaining urban character. It is a relatively swift and complete adaptation to new circumstances. From the point of view of the classical city this adaptation equals decline, but from a practical point of view it makes a lot of sense. Moreover, it was a perfectly Roman thing to do. The most urbanised region of Late Antiquity, North Africa, exhibits a strikingly similar trajectory of adaptation, in which public building were converted to productive sites.[201]

With urban spaces ceasing to be cities, many of what had previously been urban functions were dispersed into the hinterland and the ones still performed inside the urban space changed their character. How this happened can be framed in many ways, but there are indications that the evacuation of cities to hill-forts might have indeed constituted (at its infancy) a perfectly standard execution of Roman military practice. I doubt it was an administrative move – some have assumed that 'kings' were moving their seats away from cities[202] – but royal terminology at this stage might be problematic.[203] This shows parallels with Continental history of the fifth century, and therefore could be an embodiment of Roman tradition.[204] St Lupus of Troyes (Germanus' companion to Britain) led the population of his city to a hill-fort for two years.[205] The *Vita Severini* mentions the evacuation of the populace from non-defendable cities to defendable places in Noricum.[206] We have examples from the east, both in the time of the Persian wars and later, during the Arab invasions.[207] In fact, making use of

200 Wilson, 'Cataractonium(Catterick): The End of a Roman Town?', 27. It is also worth thinking about Binchester here, where large-scale animal slaughtering continued into the fifth and possibly sixth century with no coins, see: Petts, 'The 4th Century and Beyond: The Roman Barrack at Binchester (Co. Durham)', 42.

201 Leone, 'Late Antique North Africa'.

202 Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, 79, 84.

203 Perhaps this is where the redevelopment of pagus as a unit comes into play, as this would allow a detachment from such royal connotations. On the role of pagus in the transformation(s) of the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, see: Esders, 'Zur Entwicklung der politischen Raumgliederung im Übergang von der Antike zum Mittelalter: Das Beispiel des pagus', 195–211.

204 Wood, 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels', 21.

205 *Vita Lupi Episcopi Trecensis*, chap. 6.

206 *Eugippii Vita Sancti Severini*, chap. 27.

207 Liebeschuetz, 'The Refugees and Evacuees in the Age of Migration', 69.

the pre-Roman infrastructure as a place of refuge seems to be a perfectly late Roman thing to do.

The inhabitants of sub-Roman towns in Britain, as opposed to the inhabitants of Troyes, probably just never came back *en masse* (although, as in the case of Ilchester, they might have still retained connections with their old centres). The process might have been gradual and arrested – resulting in an outflow of urban population. In some places, like Wroxeter, this might have taken a considerable amount of time, with subsequent reoccupations (probably just by elite elements, maybe connected to pro-imperial parties at the beginning, and in the sixth century by groups concerned to derive their legitimacy from former Roman space) on a much smaller scale.

In case of the oft-debated Wroxeter (Roman *Viroconium Cornoviorum*) re-building sequence – where Philip Barker has identified a number of timber buildings, some free standing, some using Roman walls – we need to take a step back.[208] If such a sequence has been found on a site not previously associated with a Roman town, *or* if such a sequence had been found in a context that was not part of such a hot debate, would it be the subject of such a sentence: '[T]he contrast between the monumental stone basilica and the various timber buildings might seem most germane to an argument for discontinuity of urban life'?[209] Those who have accepted Barker's findings have made it their chief argument for survival,[210] while those who have rejected it see it as an unfounded fancy.[211] Michael Fulford and Alan Lane, who criticised the extent of the phase Z and the timber rebuilding, accepted the possibility of other kinds of activity inside the urban space.[212] But at the same time, Baker went through complicated hoops in order to explain the lack of artefactual evidence for the period 400-700. We need to remember that there is just *one* archaeomagnetic date for phase X – which formed the centrepiece of his argument – and this has been heavily contested.[213]

What to do with this conundrum? Surprisingly few of the scholars involved in this discussion have admitted even in passing that this is, at its core, a debate about how to define activity in the urban space of a former

208 Barker, *The Baths Basilica Wroxeter*.

209 Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, 43.

210 Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*; Frere, *Britannia*; Speed, *Towns in the Dark?*

211 Reece, 'The End of the City in Roman Britain'; Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*.

212 Lane, 'Wroxeter and the End of Roman Britain'; Fulford, 'Wroxeter: Legionary Fortress, Baths, and the "Great Rebuilding" of c. A. D. 450-550'.

213 Lane, 'Wroxeter and the End of Roman Britain', 508.

Roman town. The fact that there was activity can hardly be disputed on the basis of Baker's findings. What is highly disputable though is that this activity resembled that of a late-Roman city much after the 430s. Is this shift an argument to discount an important urban connection with the Roman past and re-use of infrastructure outright? Not at all.

As long as we stop extrapolating from Barker's findings a kind of flourishing Roman town and stay with the possibility of Wroxeter being first the residence of a ruler and then a symbolical point of reference we are not going to fall into fantasising. Nick Higham's proposition that the 'Wrocen sæte' of the Tribal Hidage[214] are an almost direct continuation of the *Cornovii* of Roman Britain might go too far, but he is probably right in assuming that the name derived from *Viroconium*, and that Wroxeter was indeed an important point of reference for a new political organism.[215] Adaptation and not direct continuity best explains this process.

This comes in line with other symbolic appropriations of *Romanitas*, like the ones present in Latin inscriptions in the west of Britain. A good example of this is the Vortipor stone's inscription MEMORIA / VOTEPORIGIS / PROTICTORIS – 'Memory of Vorteporis the Protector', appropriating Roman terminology.[216] This dual-centred process might have gone back and forth for over a hundred years in some areas of Britain, like the south-west.[217] In the future inscriptions may form one of the most fruitful avenues of inquiry.[218] The inscription habit is perhaps the most tangible example of the attachement to the Roman idea.

We can also turn in a different direction. While it is always difficult to analyse hagiography as a historical source, it works surprisingly well in analysing the attitudes of the people who wrote it. *The Life of St John the Almsgiver* by Leontius of Neapolis (modern Limassol in Cyprus), written in

214 For the textual history of Tribal Hidage, see: Dumville, 'The Tribal Hidage: An Introduction to Its Texts and Their History', 225–30.

215 Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire*, 68, 75.

216 Edwards, ed., *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales: South-West Wales*, vol. 2, CM3 and Nash-Williams, ed., *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales*, no 138.

217 Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*, 128.

218 In the closing stages of the writing of this book an inscription has been found in Tintagel, Cornwall, dating from the seventh century, reading TITO BUDIC FILII VIRII DUO. It might show a fossilised survival of a term duumviri (now completely devoid of practical connection and transferred to a place with no Roman urban tradition) well into the Early Middle Ages, supporting the important role of the titles connected to Roman urban administration, which we discussed in the context of Gildas. http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about-us/search-news/tintagel-archaeology (accessed: 20 June 2018).

the mid-seventh century, states that the captain of an Alexandrian ship has gone on a voyage to Britain where he receives an interesting offer:

> Then after the twentieth day we caught sight of the islands of Britain, and when we had landed we found a great famine raging there. Accordingly, when we told the chief man of the town that we were laden with corn, he said, "God has brought you at the right moment. Choose as you wish, either one 'nomisma' for each bushel or a return freight of tin". And we chose half of each.[219]

What is probably is referred to in this story is exactly that kind of 'symbolic' urbanism that emerges from the transformations discussed above. If this episode references a real event (or a combination of real events) then the local aristocrat might have referred to himself as a 'πρώτος τες πόλεις' – the 'first man of the city', the 'chief man', but the 'civitas' / 'polis' he was referring to was no longer an urban space by Roman or early Byzantine standards.

The transaction was purportedly conducted with a representative of a local *polis* that was long assumed to be Exeter. But Frere already cast doubt on that identification, preferring one of the hill-forts.[220] Now this is a Late Antique, Eastern Mediterranean hagiographical text that might simply impose the knowledge and realities of its time and place on Britain, but trade with the Eastern Mediterranean is proven archaeologically in the epoch preceding the writing of the *Life*. The episode, together with the scale of exchange with the Mediterranean confirmed in the archaeological record[221] (we have evidence for Byzantine individuals residing in Southern Britain at a comparable time),[222] shows that there might have been a certain level of coin economy at the beginning of the seventh century. The record of the transaction sounds plausible and devoid of miraculous interventions, which elsewhere in the text are in abundance. Direct imports from the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean to Britain have been reasonably confirmed.[223] Bronze coins were available in Southern Britain at the time, although it is not

219 Leontius, *Life of St John the Almsgiver*, chap. 10; partially translated in: Dawes and Baynes, eds., *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies*.

220 Frere, 'The End of Towns in Roman Britain', 95. His interpretation of Castle Dore seems to me highly unlikely though.

221 The summary of those exchanges can be found in: Duggan, *Links to Late Antiquity*.

222 Hemer et al., 'Evidence of Early Medieval Trade and Migration between Wales and the Mediterranean Sea Region', 2352–59.

223 Fulford, 'Byzantium and Britain', 1–6.

entirely clear for what function.[224] There must have been enough surplus 'to enable long distance exchange of commodities and luxury items such as wine and oil' in zones like the one around South Cadbury.[225] In the *Secret History*, Procopius mentions Justinian sending money to Britain, and profusely criticizes him for it.[226] There was an interest in the island as a possible 'former imperial possession' from the point of view of Constantinople. Procopius makes it clear that Britain, although covered in myth and legends, was much on the radar not only of the common populace but also of imperial diplomacy.

Therefore, as long as we do not read the episode too literally, we might see in it how an author of a hagiography based in the Eastern Mediterranean could process the information available to them about Britain. If there were individuals, like Tito and Boudic or Vorteporis, who stuck to using Roman municipial terminology, this highly symbolised an attachement to the institutional infrastructure of the Roman Empire, and would be recognised as part of the wider, Roman world.

'Symbolisation' of urban space is a well known phenomenon from the Roman world. Gerrard has suggested that it had begun already in the late Roman period, with the maintenance of elaborate defences in late Roman British towns serving mainly symbolic and prestigious purposes.[227] Moreover, it might show that Michael Aston's 'multi-focal' concept of exercising town functions[228] might in fact be of sub-Roman heritage.[229] In that model, the (at this stage) former Roman town served a symbolic purpose and, in limited examples (e.g., Lincoln with its church of St Paul in the Bail in the former Roman forum), an ecclesiastical one, while the other functions of a town were exercised by settlements and the infrastructure in its immediate vicinity.[230] What could have glued those arrangements together, at least initially, was the maintenance of the specifically Roman titulature. This is not a new model; it is a model we know from the Early Medieval context in the South and East after the year 600. Multi-focality could draw on earlier, pre-Roman

224 Williams, 'The Circulation, Minting, and Use of Coins in East Anglia, c. AD 580-675', 123–25.
225 Davey, 'The Environs of South Cadbury in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Periods', 52.
226 Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, bk. 19.13; which, in the light of recent discoveries and analysis of bone remains from South-Western Britain, might be closer to the truth than previously thought, see: Hemer et al., 'Evidence of Early Medieval Trade and Migration between Wales and the Mediterranean Sea Region'.
227 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 43–55.
228 Aston and Bond, *The Landscape of Towns*.
229 See arguments for the Roman heritage of Withington multiple estate: Finberg, *Roman and Saxon Withington*.
230 Steane, 'St Paul-in-the-Bail – a Dated Sequence?', 28–31; Gilmour, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church at St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln', 214–18.

examples of oppida, but I see it as a reaction to the immediate post-Roman situation. Multifocality is also known from the Continent, although on a much smaller scale,[231] and of course it alos occurred in the Early Medieval period. Still, in the Late Saxon period the ambiguity between urban and rural zones was strong, a direct inheritance of that model.[232] This shows that more focus should be given to the actual functions fulfilled than to the precise character of the particular zones inside those arrangements. It is the distinction that defines these zones and binds them together.

One example of such problems of interpretation is provided by the recent finds at Ipplepen in Devon. They show that there could have been quite a few more Roman towns in the area which were previously thought not to be Romanised at all – and these would be the small towns, roadside settlements that, as we have previously established, maintained their productive capacity for longer. The Ipplepen Archaeological Project is on-going but the recent results confirm that a Christian cemetery along a Roman road existed there in the mid-seventh century.[233] The staff of the project now classifies the site as a 'village' but, according to the available information, the number of finds and span of the site go far beyond that description. We need to await the publication of the results, but Ipplepen might prove a remarkable example of continuous usage of an Iron Age-Roman-Early Medieval site.

The excavations in Caistor-by-Norwich, one of the three Roman regional capitals in Britain not succeeded by Medieval and Modern towns (together with Wroxeter and Silchester) seem to be hinting at a similar pattern.[234] The site of Roman Ilchester seems to have exercised some of its functions at the same time as the South Cadbury hill-fort, and there are imports of Mediterranean pottery from the fith and sixth centuries.[235] Numerous burials occurred in close proximity to Roman towns – York, Caistor-by-Norwich, Ancaster – which indicates either a lingering significance of those places inside multi-focal arrangements, or, for example, the control that they exercised over the road network.[236]

Such a model allowed the former urban spaces to be used as governance resources without maintaining them as sites of permanent occupation, and

231 Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul*, 78.

232 Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England*, 85.

233 Rippon, 'New Radiocarbon Dates from Ipplepen', *Ipplepen Archaeological Project* <http://ipplepen.exeter.ac.uk/2017/02/new-radiocarbon-dates-from-ipplepen/> [accessed 10 Septemeber 2020]. The road could well be the herepath mentioned in the charter S601 from 956.

234 Bowden, 'The Iceni under Rome: New Research on Caistor Roman Town', 28–35.

235 Davey, *The Roman to Medieval Transition in the Region of South Cadbury Castle, Somerset*, 130.

236 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 197.

it might be one of the meaningful explanations of the transition between Roman urbanism and para-urbanism that springs from Roman practice but ends up as a new arrangement that makes extensive re-use of Roman assets, mostly in the symbolical and ideological sphere. This helped to cement the former Roman urban spaces not only as fixtures in the landscape but also as sites to be later re-occupied.

4. Urban Spaces in the Conversion Period and the Times of Bede (597-735)

4.1 The Strategies of Activation

The advent of the mission of Gregory profoundly changed the trajectory of the political evolution of the Early Medieval kingdoms in Britain. It made the Late Antique assets worthwile of investment; the Roman and Christian past became even more attractive. The way urban space began to be treated changed as well. The arrival of the Roman Church helped to further activate many Roman-walled enclosures as governance resources.[237] Coin minting, for example, was a powerful royal prerogative, its execution both an act of power and an ideological statement that can benefit from a legitimisation rooted in the past. This, as Rory Naismith points out, changed in the later period (outside of our chronological scope), and uniquely in Britain became greatly influenced by a group of magnates and moneyers, with less involvement of the royal authority.[238] In the earliest period, moneyers could only be found in or in the vicinity of places that were once Roman cities, settlements, or forts, or had at least a strong Roman connection.[239] Not surprisingly we see similar processes on the Continent – in Gaul almost every civitas became a place for minting and other locations with Roman connections also feature prominently on the list of Merovingian mints.[240] This seems to have had also a tentative connection with the later law in Britain, specifying that no money could be minted outside of the *port*,[241] with *port* being a term derived from Vulgar Latin.[242]

237 Also by British actors: See the synod discussion below.
238 Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 90–96.
239 Stephenson, *Borough and Town, a Study of Urban Origins in England*, 50.
240 Strothmann, 'Merowingische Monetarmünzen und die Gallia im 7. Jahrhundert', 39–40.
241 Attenborough, ed., *II Aethelstan*, chap. 14.
242 Kinsey, 'Anglo-Saxon Law and Practice Relating to Mints and Moneyers', 14.

Similarly, as in the case of charters, the hierarchy of Roman places seem to have been preserved. With the expansion of minting activities to non-Roman sites, the terms *civitas* and *urbs* occurred: Canterbury, Chichester, Exeter, London, York, and Bath were all granted at some point the status of *civitas* on the face of the coins minted there (respectively the Roman *civitates* of *Durovernum Cantiacorum, Noviomagus Regnensium, Isca Dumnoniorum*; *coloniae* of *Eburacum*, and *Londinium*; and *Aquae Sullis* which I interpret as being 'elevated' to the status of *civitas* by the virtue of its post-Roman history and possibly its large amount of surviving Roman masonry). The case of London is of course special, with the legend *civitas* appearing there earlier, for the first time on a golden coin of the 830s.[243]

In their iconography, the earliest English coins show striking borrowings from the late Roman examples,[244] which can be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the legitimisation, authority, power, and acceptance of the coinage by its attachment to the past. The East Anglian coinage of the early seventh century imitates Roman coinage directly, without the use of Frankish derivatives.[245] The placing of early mints in connection with Roman urban spaces or places with a Roman past could have been a conscious decision. It worked not only on the 'home front' – coins had the ability to give a semblance of Roman legitimisation also in the outside world through exchange and gifts. This extended the usability of this connection also to matters of foreign policy and dealings with the Continent.

Governance resources could be used in many ways, and striking coins fits into the performative aspect of those resources. Roman urban space was a performative space in the Early Medieval period: It allowed or strengthened the execution of certain acts, including the execution, discussion, and promulgation of law. As Guy Halsall has remarked, Romanness was first and foremost performed.[246] In the context of Britain, it is important to ask how this performance has been translated both ideologically and spatially into the Early Medieval period. Post-Roman space, and particularly urban space, played a crucial role in this transition.

The Church was of course well aquainted with using the Roman urban space in a performative manner. One of the key assets in this process was

243 Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, *c.* 650–750: Trade, Industry and the Rise of Mercia', 14–15.

244 This often had indirect ways of entering the coin imagery and should not be assumed to be a direct continuation, see: Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries*, 58, 75.

245 Williams, 'The Circulation, Minting, and Use of Coins in East Anglia, *c.* AD 580-675', 132.

246 Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, 98.

a synod. Britain was no exception in that matter and we observe a more intensive interest in performing it in Roman urban spaces from the end of the sixth century onwards. There is reason to believe that the synod of *Urbs Legionis* was held at Chester.[247] There are multiple reasons for the fact that Chester was chosen as the site for this gathering that are worth exploring in detail. It is an interesting case of the adaptation of a former Roman urban space.

Chester was the site of the fourth-century bishopric that partook in the extensive salt operations near Crewe that might have lasted until the sixth or even the beginning of the seventh century; right until the period between the synod and the battle of Chester.[248] Whether the Church actually owned these operations is unclear. One possibility is that the Church already controlled state-owned industries (and possibly the tax connected with them) in the late Roman period, and that this practice continued into Early Medieval times. One find, a salt pan with the inscription VIVENTI [EPIS]COPI from Shavington, Cheshire, might be an example of such practice.[249] The pan cannot be dated precisely but it is probably late Roman and might show the slow overtaking of usually state-controlled salt industries by the Church.[250] There are other pans with inscriptions that have been re-evaluated in light of the 'Viventius' inscription, chief of them being the 'CUNITICLE pan', that Matthews has read as CUNITI CLE[RICI].[251] The Cheshire salt industry was a large-scale operation that is a remarkable example of industrial continuity. The peculiar trajectory of the control over the local salt industry in Cheshire might have something to do with localised control over the saltworks as a preserve of *Legio XX* in Chester.[252] After the rulers of Mercia took over the area, they inherited the salt prerogatives from the previous rulers.[253] The interface between the ecclesiastical and military actors is murky to say the least, but it seems not far-fetched to maintain that the Church could offer administrative support necessary to the maintenance (albeit in a reduced form) of the salt industry. Somewhat paradoxically, the taking over of those infrastructures by Mercia was only possible thank to the extensive adaptation of the formerly state monopoly into an ecclesiastical operation.

247 This event is corroborated by Bede and not only by *Annales Cambriae*. It is also mentioned in the Irish Annals: Chadwick, 'The Battle of Chester: A Study of Sources', 167–85.

248 Mason, *Chester AD 400 – 1066*, 29–30.

249 Penney and Shotter, 'An Inscribed Roman Salt-Pan from Shavington, Cheshire', 365.

250 It should be noted here that 'episcopus' might also mean 'overseer'.

251 Matthews, 'Rural Settlement in Roman Cheshire', 30.

252 Gerrard, 'Feeding the Army from Dorset: Pottery, Salt and the Roman State', 123.

253 Sawyer, *The Wealth of Anglo-Saxon England*, 44.

Late Roman, sub-Roman, and Early Medieval Chester up to the battle of Chester would then be a largely ecclesiastically controlled *territorium*, similar perhaps to the examples that we know from Early Medieval Gaul.[254] The growing power of the bishop in this particular, regional case would have started sometime in the late Roman period with increasing donations, rents, and probably also administrative control over the diminishing city itself. This would then have been a process that would 'straddle' the official end of Roman rule in Britain. By no means is this is a standard development in the period; it is more of an anomaly, brought on by specific circumstances.[255] The presence of wine amphorae imports from the post-Roman period might hint at the largely ecclesiastic character of the region.[256] There is one great distinction with the situation on the Continent: The 'core city' of Chester no longer existed in its original form but served as a symbolical point of reference and perhaps also as a form of a fortified refuge settlement. There is no reason to try and force continuity of urban life in Chester itself. It is tempting to quote in this context Simon Loseby's passage about Arles as a city 'predominantly run by and for the benefit of the state, and the history of its secular landscape in the fourth and fifth centuries reflects the drift of that state from confidence to crisis'.[257] The same could be said about Chester, with the Church stepping in helped first to adapt and then to preserve those elements of urban space that were useful and important for the community. It is a process similar to the one described by Jill Harries in the context of Late Roman Gaul that included greater reliance on ecclesiastical actors.[258] We should not use the example of Chester as one that allows us to draw universal parallels with other areas of Britain; it is important to remember that those were all starkly regionalised processes.[259]

254 Ermini, 'Episcopus, Civitas, Territorium', 1–17.

255 At such an early period this would be an isolated example, which puts Britain and Chester in the avantgarde of the adaptations of the Roman world. The evidence we have from Gaul shows that bishops did not take such a prominent role until the end of the sixth century. Nevertheless, in specific circumstances this could occur, making Chester not so different from the rest of the post-Roman West, see: Durliat, 'Les attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens : l'exemple de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630-655)', 237–54.

256 Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire*, 66.

257 Loseby, 'Arles in Late Antiquity', 57.

258 Harries, 'Christianity and the City in Late Roman Gaul', 95–96. Interestingly what Harries takes as a generalisation was probably an exception in the Gallic context. Chester was a place where such process occurred *because* it was special and different, not because it followed general trends.

259 E.g., the place-name evidence from Bernicia, the region corresponding to the land between the Frith of Forth and Tees valley, shows that the fragmentation even of such a small area was

The significant role of the Church in maintaining local government in a frontier situation, like Chester, can also be seen on the Lower Danube in the fifth century.[260] Both of these examples show that in regional cases bishops could step up at an early date to assist in the secular administration. As the examples of other regions of the post-Roman West show, it was unlikely for the universal growth of the episcopal economic power to be a phenomenon occurring before the late sixth/early seventh century.[261]

All this points towards the conclusion that during the Synod of Chester the bishops gathered in a place of great significance: It was connected to the Roman past, and was possibly also significant because of the emergence of the Church as the leading authority in the late Roman and Early Medieval periods. There was a flurry of activity in Chester's hinterland at this time, including the funding of a significantly named sub-Roman community of Eccleston (fitting into the *ecles place names group, signifying Christian settlements)[262] that moved from Heronbridge and was present at its new site at the latest by the beginning of the seventh century.[263] *Performing* the act of synod in a Roman urban space that dominated this region – even saturated with this past – gave the British bishops the necessary authority to respond to the encroachment of the Roman mission.[264] The former Roman city became a performative space that enabled them to conduct the synodal proceedings.[265] The stones spoke the language of authority, making Chester the arena for the ideological fight for the legacy of *Romanitas*.

This act of a synod in a Roman urban space, when and where the inheritance of Rome is at stake, is not an isolated practice. There are further traces, like the synod held at what could have been Roman Alcester, about which we learn from the letter of Brihtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury to Forthhere,

immense: Wood, 'Bernician Transitions: Place-Names and Archaeology', 61. In light of such evidence we need to be careful in generalising findings from different regions.

260 Poulter, 'The Use and Abuse of Urbanism in the Danubian Provinces during the Later Roman Empire', 122.

261 Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400–750', 37–73; Wood, *The Transformation of the Roman West*.

262 Which might be the places where existing Romano-British communities were incorporated in to the post-Roman landscape, see: Brooks, 'From British to English Christianity', 19–20.

263 Mason, *Chester AD 400 – 1066*, 49.

264 Clare Stancliffe sees the British as ready to take missionary work among the inhabitants of the eastern part of the island but as partners and not as subjugated subordinates. This desire for 'partnership' should not be underestimated and in its pursuit the British could and did use the Roman infrastructure creatively. For the Augustine Oak reading, see: Stancliffe, 'The British Church and the Mission of Augustine', 107–51.

265 See the discussion of Chester in the next chapter.

Bishop of Sherborne, and which was supposed to have happened in 709 'in loco qui Alne dicitur'.[266] This synod is important also because of the traditional resistance to the preaching of the 'Roman' Church in the area, and surviving British Christianity is evidenced by an *ecles place name in the vicinity.[267]

The appropriation of Roman spaces as spaces of assembly in general seems to be a wider phenomenon. In some places in Britain in the post-Roman period amphitheatres underwent a similar evolution to that which occured on the Continent – fortification and/or mutation into an assembly space.[268] The space of the amphitheatre in Chester was used as a fortified settlement as evidenced by the blocking of the *vomitoria* and the entrances, and this settlement might have been recognised by Aethelred of Mercia in the seventh century as shown by the building of the church of St John just outside its walls.[269] The special significance of the amphitheatre as a place of Christian martyrdom must have been of particular importance for the Church, although we lack written record from the British context to confirm this.[270]

Apart from becoming a fortified refuge, the amphitheatre could play a role as an assembly space, like in Dorchester, London, or Canterbury.[271] The example of Canterbury, centre of the Kentish kingship under strong Merovingian and hence Continental influence, is particularly interesting.[272] It is difficult to establish if the use of the theatre as an assembly place in this case was a direct taking over of a late Roman practice, or one re-introduced from the Continent, or just a matter of convenience. After all, as Barbara

266 'Letter of Brihtwald to Forthhere', 283.

267 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 93.

268 A good example of that process occuring already in the late Roman period can be found in Tours, see: Seigne, 'La fortification de la ville au Bas Empire, de l'amphithéâtre-forteresse au Castrum'; Lefèbvre, 'Formation d'un tissu urbain dans la Cité de Tours'.

269 Wilmott, *The Roman Amphitheatre in Britain*, Reprinted, 184–85.

270 The long awaited results of the Chester amphitheatre excavations are now getting published. For now only the first volume, covering the Roman period is available, but the excavators have included a short summary of the post-Roman phase at the end of their work. Their research seems to support the hypothesis of a particular development of Chester amphitheatre site. It seems that an Early Medieval (fifth-seventh century) church had been built inside the structure. The excavators see it as a precursor of the St John church built by Aethelred of Mercia. We need to wait for Volume 2 for more conclusive evidence: Wilmott and Garner, *The Roman Amphitheatre of Chester*. We can be reasonably sure that the *castrum legionis* where Julius and Aaron were martyred and later venerated was, indeed, Chester, see: Matthews, 'Chester's Amphitheatre after Rome', 12–27.

271 Baker and Brookes, 'Outside the Gate', 749, 755.

272 Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea*.

Yorke has written, 'even before the seventh century Anglo-Saxon kings were not unaware that they had taken over parts of a former Roman province and were the heirs of Roman emperors',[273] and an amphitheatre as an assembly place allowed for strong ideological connection that would be clear for domestic as well as foreign audiences – especially important in a place like Kent that maintained strong links with the Merovingian kingdoms. Mimicking that behaviour in the local context might stand behind the wooden amphitheatre structures in Yeavering. In Canterbury, the amphitheatre became the focal point of the new, Early Medieval street plan – no doubt it was used not only for assemblies but also for formal occasions, possibly like the amphitheatre of Milan in the Early Middle Ages.[274]

Property rights also played a key role. It has been noted that amphitheatres, like other public buildings, tended to remain public property far into the Middle Ages.[275] In London, the Guildhall was located on the site of the Roman amphitheatre and was an Early Medieval assembly place.[276] Is this all a 'Roman' practice? Yes, in a way. Neil Christie drew some interesting conclusions when analysing sixth-century Pannonia that apply well to Early Medieval Britain. 'Roman' might denote not only the 'sites and structures' left by Rome, but also a level of lingering Romanised population (able to transmit patterns of behaviour) and, in this case most importantly, an exploitation of ruinous places.[277] This is important not only in light of the transmission of patterns of power or the discussion of the lingering *Romanitas* in Britain, but it also helps to erode at least a little of the 'special case' scenario of Britain's development in the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries by showing that it exhibited parallel processes to those known from other frontier provinces.

Nevertheless, adaptations did diverge. Early English laws do not single out Roman urban space. One of the reasons for this is fairly obvious: As opposed to Continental examples, in Britain the codes of laws were issued after the urban population ceased to constitute any important part of the society – although we do have Continental codes of law enacted in a non-urban context in the case of the Alammanic Law or the laws of the Bavarians.[278] The power structures of Roman Britain had exhibited a shift

273 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 19.

274 Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 25.

275 Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, 116–18, 219–20.

276 Biddle, 'A City in Transition: 400-800', 24; Cowie et al., *Lundenwic*.

277 Christie, 'Towns, Lands and Power: German-Roman Survivals and Interactions in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Pannonia', 284–85.

278 Rivers, ed., *Laws of the Alamans and Bavarians*, 36.

into a rural context already in the second half of the fourth century.[279] We should also not overstate the level of urbanisation in Britain. Even at periods when cities still continued to play a role in the late-Roman and early sub-Roman period the urban population never exceeded 10% of the total populace.[280] Additionally, it has been argued that even during their flourishing period, cities contained no 'urban proletariat', although both the term and the assumption might be difficult to prove and sustain in light of the evidence.[281] In this respect, there was no reason for the early kings to legislate separate provisions for an area that harboured virtually no inhabitants of special status.

In the early post Roman period, much activity happened *close* to but not *within* Roman urban space. This is the case with many assembly sites as well as sites of the sees, which were often located in a rural context close to a former Roman site.[282] This can be explained by the multifocal arrangement of settlements in the early period. In that context, a Roman site served an important symbolical role. Sub-urban locations outside the gates of Roman towns have been identified in Gloucester, Stratford-sub-Castle (Roman *Sorviodunum*); *Verulamium* also had assembly places right outside its walls.[283]

Later locations where laws were promulgated or where *witangemot* met offer a mixed picture.[284] Place-name evidence shows that wood clearings played an important role and there is no clear correlation with former Roman urban spaces. Many of those assembly places were close to or directly on Roman roads, similar to a number of burial sites.[285] This might be an argument for the changing landscape of power *after* the end of the seventh century. We see the same pattern with mints. This should not be explained as a break with the Roman past, but a sign of the changing landscape of power, the expansion of administrative structures (we should never underestimate purely practical reasons), and a growing number of other sources of legitimisation and authority – Rome was not enough. The examples of symbolic use of Roman urban space definitely featured alongside practical ones in the burgh establishment program – chronologically beyond the scope of this chapter.

279 Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 212.
280 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 55.
281 Dixon, '"The Cities Are Not Populated as Once They Were"', 145–60.
282 Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester Before and After the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', 247.
283 Baker and Brookes, 'Outside the Gate: Sub-Urban Legal Practices in Early Medieval England'.
284 Roach, *Kingship and Consent 45-76*; Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' (978-1016)*, 198.
285 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 171.

4.2 Sources of Authority

The much-contested passage from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* sub anno 577 offers us an opportunity to talk about Roman urban space as a source of authority:

> This year Cuthwin and Ceawlin fought with the Britons, and slew three kings, Commail, and Condida, and Farinmail, on the spot that is called Derham, and took from them three cities, Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath.[286]

A lot is happening in this passage. What are we to do with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentioning cities being besieged in the sixth century, and why are we discussing it in the part of the book concerning the post-Conversion period? Are we to understand the passage purely symbolically, given that the archaeological record is scarce? Writing in 1943, for Frank Stenton this battle was still a fact.[287] But we know now that this is highly improbable. The events here have been deconstructed by Patrick Sims-Williams who has discarded the text as a West Saxon fabrication to lay claim to Mercian territory.[288] No flourishing Roman cities changed hands in 577. But there is something else to be gained from an analysis of this passage. Let us then focus on the important role that was ascribed to Roman cities in this fabrication. In the light of Sims-Williams' arguments, we cannot see this as an example of urban continuity. We cannot even properly asses what parts of the annal belong together – i.e., which kings fell at which battle and where.[289] Instead we should focus on what was to be gained from using the Roman urban past in a chronicle. In other words, why was it useful to fake the Roman past?

We need to reastablish the picture of the region. Archaeological records are richer now than they were almost forty years ago. Bath, known for its 'hot springs', is mentioned by Bede and by the *Historia Brittonum* as a significant place. It has been long assumed that the precinct of the temple of Sulis Minerva in Bath could have survived into the Early Medieval period, but the chronology has now been revised to show that the act of demolition occurred in the late fifth century.[290] This act of demolition was a powerful, deliberate

286 Michael Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, s.a. 577.
287 Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29.
288 Sims-Williams, 'The Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle', 31-33, 40-41.
289 Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 21.
290 Gerrard, 'The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the End of Roman Britain', 148.

event that required considerable resources.[291] If the temple continued up to this time as a pagan religious site, what we are seeing here was a final overture in a Late Antique struggle between paganism and Christianity. Demolition provided an ideological victory but also, on a practical note, building material. We are witnessing here a reflection of a practice which was quite typical in both the post-Roman West and East.[292] The operation required significant resources (both human and governance) and paradoxically the ability to perform it was a very 'Roman' thing to do. By performing *Romanitas* the local elites contributed to the disappearance of one of its overt elements. An extreme case of losing distinction through adaptation.

The area of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire was a zone where the Roman order survived the longest, and that the subsequent kingdom of the Hwicce was of mixed origin, combining Romano-British and external elements.[293] And again, by surviving the longest it lost a lot of its distinction, as we can see by looking at the number of times major settlements are refered to as *civitas* in the charters.[294] A look at the density map of the distribution of charters shows that the region was also extremely important in diplomatic practice. The charter was instrumental in the mass transfer of land to the Church and in the creation of the ecclesiastical geographies of power.[295] A high density of charters was connected with changes in the previously existing geography of ownership – a charter is an instrument of preserving change. Vast tracks of land changed hands. A charter is often a more cautious instrument of ownership alteration, its use indicating a need for greater security. At the same time its proliferation, and therefore acceptance, might be a sign of a lingering Roman vulgar law tradition. Regions with a high density of charter grants had pre-existing property structures that were reorganised. This means that such regions can evidence long-surviving post-Roman structures, re-organised by the new rulers. Even when we consider the survivability of documents and the possible losses, the territory of the Hwicce appears to us as a region of unprecedented activity.

These places are singled out in the sources not because they were actual cities (although a case can be made for activity inside them) or even, as Speed or White would have them, as centres of power of petty polities (although this

291 Gerrard, 'The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the End of Roman Britain', 160.

292 Leone, *The End of the Pagan City*, 32.

293 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 17.

294 Wide-ranging adaptation seems to have nevertheless brought fruit later, when there are examples of a much larger density of settlements with structural evidence and towns exhibiting urban features, see: Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, 326.

295 Wood, 'Monasteries and the Geography of Power in the Age of Bede', 13.

cannot be wholly excluded of course), or 'central places' (in itself a problematic term). Cirencester (with its repurposed amphitheatre that could serve as an out-of-town marketplace and a focal point) was a reference point to a sub-Roman polity and has been a subject to some form of change in material culture already in the period 450-550.[296] It reappears in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* sub anno 628, this time as a point of conflict between Mercia and Wessex.[297] Those urban spaces were governance resources giving a claim to the area, facilitating the disposal of land (*vide* the extensive charter activity in the region) and they were a battleground for the heritage of *Romanitas*. The ability to control them, to produce proofs of control in the past or to fabricate them (as the scribe of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has done) gave the right to be an inheritor of Rome. Early Medieval rulers in Britain were keenly aware of being effectively monarchs of Roman Empire successor polities. Post-Roman Britain was characterised by a hierarchical structure of authority and at the same time the tension between the regionalised local power centres and the attachement to the idea of Roman administration.[298] This made a successor status a valuable asset indeed – one that allowed for a projection of authority across these entangled power structures. In this light the s.a. 577 entry is not only a reflection of a struggle between Mercia and Wessex, but also an example of the ideological re-use of Roman urban space. What easier way to make a claim to a particular area to the audience of the chronicle than to assert it by showing control of a (former) Roman city? The text was written in the ninth century, in the context of West Saxon reoccupation and strengthening of defences that made extensive use of Roman infrastructure. Roman infrastructure mattered, and it mattered not only in its practical use but also as a source of legitimisation and authority. In this light the veracity of the battle of Deorham is actually less interesting than the need to fabricate its existence and what could be gained from such a fabrication.

Of course Roman infrastructure mattered also in purely material terms. As Nicholas Higham has noted, the bulk of silver in Eastern Britain came from the West of the island.[299] This did include raiding, but was probably overwhelmingly based on exchange – not only trade but also cultural exchange, both impossible to achieve without Roman infrastructure, without

296 White, *Britannia Prima*, 207. Although I am not so sure about White's interpretation of that polity as a civitas-kingdom.

297 Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* s.a. 628.

298 Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 4, 7-8.

299 Higham, 'From Sub-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England', 18.

Roman roads, and without still-maintained elements of Roman economic infrastructure.[300] One should also not forget the elements of Roman production infrastructure that are less tangible – like weaving techniques – which penetrated the culture of the island through Romano-Britons.[301] The Roman urban spaces serving as places of exchange facilitated those connections. This reminds us also that everytime we look at the West or the East of Britain in isolation, we are going to miss half of the organism we are analysing by introducing an essentially spurious faultline. There were big regional differences in Britain when it came to using and re-using Roman infrastructures but we see them properly only when looking at the island as a whole.

4.3 Between 'Continuity of Place' and 'Urban Continuity'

We can already see that when it comes to urban spaces in Britain the key to understand their history in the post-Roman period is through adaptations of infrastructures – both material and symbolic. In that respect they exhibit a strong continuity of place: An anchoring to a particular location connected with an actively maintained memory. The importance of those spaces for the governance, culture and trade of post-Roman Britain remained profound. Nevertheless, there was very little of what is described as urban continuity – the maintenance of organised urban occupation and life. And so, even though Britain seems to have had large scale building operations like the dismantling of the Bath temple in the fifth century, classical education usually associated with cities in the sixth century, and *duumviri* in the seventh century, it had no more cities in the late Roman sense. The late Roman city became a phantom limb, both present and non-existent but still with immense influence on the whole organism.

At first glance it strikes us as an arresting example of rapid de-Romanization. But such assesment misses the point of this development, because the abandonment of the late Roman urban model clearly followed the Roman playbook. The widespread adaptation of institutions and infrastructures not only made Britain a realatively recognisable part of the post-Roman world, but also paved the way towards the reoccupation of former Roman towns in the later period. If you are going to look for continuity alone you are going to miss the huge Roman elephant in the room.

The reoccupation of former Roman towns, apart from being a process rooted in the past, was an activity that benefited from the resurgence of

300 One is reminded of the gold mines mentioned in Chapter 2.
301 Owen-Crocker, 'British Wives and Slaves?', 80–90.

internal trade.[302] This internal trade might have strongly utilised Roman roads, which, as we have seen in Chapter 2, also benefited from the process of adaptation. In fact, even new foundations, like Evesham that grew thanks to an abbey, might have originated in part as a result of the renewed control of trade in goods produced in former Romano-British industries.[303] In some cases, like salt in the Droitwich area, direct continuity cannot be excluded.[304] The reoccupation proper (re-use of former Roman urban spaces in the burghal system and late-Saxon protourbanism) benefited directly from those adaptation processes and from the Roman infrastructure. Those adaptations led, as we have seen so many times, to a loss of distinction. It is reflected in the way the space was re-used. One can see that in the morphology of urban places – notable upgrades in places like Winchester show a street plan deviating from the Roman one.[305] The symbolic aspects were still important, but their point of gravity has changed. To understand this, one has to look at the dichotomy between the 'continuity of place' and 'urban continuity'.

In terms of re-use, how are we to deal with the problem of temporary abandonment? The reasons to re-occupy urban infrastructure and locations of cities are complicated and manifold and can rarely be explained by one factor alone; and, for that matter, it is rare that we have enough evidence to pinpoint one of them as the decisive one. The example of the 'moving centre' of York from the fifth to the ninth centuries is a case in poin: There was never a total abandonment of the urban space there. But its functionality, point of gravity and role changed rapidly and many times, in response to environmental, political, economic, and military factors.[306] Sometimes the continuities we see are continuities in the hinterland of the city, which then, after a while, builds up the potential to re-use the city itself.[307]

Written sources show that the memory of urbanism in Britain was strong. The list of 28 cities of the *Historia Brittonum* – composed sometime at the beginning of the ninth century, although it is not known from any contemporary manuscript, it has been seen as a monument to memory

302 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 120.

303 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 217–25.

304 Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, *c.* 650–750: Trade, Industry and the Rise of Mercia'.

305 Christie, 'Creating Defended Communities in Later Saxon Wessex', 57. Although the plan of Roman roads around the city remained intact, allowing the city gates to stay in the same locations as in Roman times and to still succesfully manage the traffic in and out of town: Biddle and Hill, 'Late Saxon Planned Towns', 70–71.

306 Fafinski, 'The Moving Centre', 71–77.

307 Spall and Toop, 'Before Eoforwic', 1–25.

in a literary form rather than a historical record of continuity – proves exactly that.[308] The author[309] attempted to fill in the '28 cities of Britain' from Gildas,[310] and attempted to do so with the Welsh names of as many Roman places as they could. In later editions and recensions, due to the misreading of XXVIII as XXXIII, five more were added, and they also were mostly connected with the Roman past.[311]

Continuity of place is crucial for performing one's identity.[312] Therefore it comes as no surprise that a western source like *Historia Brittonum* engaged in this mental experiment of listing 28 cities in Britain. This is also a form of symbolical re-use. For the author it was irrelevant what kind of physical continuity existed. Those are still former Roman urban spaces influencing an ideological outlook in the early ninth century. We can only speculate what the author of that particular passage knew about the state of those places at the time of writing, but it was probably little, and in any case did not matter much. What did matter was that virtually all of those places were now claimed by polities that also furthered their claim to the Roman past as essentially Roman successor states. This process of claiming and re-claiming the past shows that for Early Medieval authors, urban continuity was far less (if at all) important than the continuity of place. In a way, the continuity of place (as evidenced also by place-name survival)[313] was far more usable as a resource than urban continuity – for sure it required mustering lesser resources.[314]

When reoccupation was possible (and desirable), there is little doubt that existing memory (even if it was limited to a place-name only) facilitated that process. The urbanism of the late Saxon periods looks now much less developed than previously thought. This should make us think of the important role of the memory of Roman urban spaces, with all the actions here analysed as coming *from* the Late Antique period and not looking *back* at it. The Early Middle Ages of Britain might be much more connected with the Roman past than we care to admit,[315] which is neatly illustrated

308 *The Historia Brittonum*, chap. 3.

309 Who was probably not, as was once assumed, Nennius: Dumville, 'Some Aspects of the Chronology of the Historia Brittonum', 439–445.

310 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, chap. III.

311 Jackson, 'Nennius and the Twenty-Eight Cities of Britain', 44–55.

312 Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 'Place and Identity Processes', 207.

313 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 165.

314 Attachement to the Past and the continuity of place can be powerful sources of authority, also in the Medieval contex, see: Harvey, 'Continuity, Authority and the Place of Heritage in the Medieval World', 47–59.

315 Even though parts of the terminology in Hunter's article are dated it still provides an excellent introduction to the 'sense of the past' and the attachement to Roman past in Early

by the Early Medieval houses propped against the walls of decaying Roman townhouses in London, when it was reoccupied in the early tenth century.[316]

This 'memory of place' combined with practical elements – standing defences that can be manned and easily rebuilt or reused – contributed significantly to the reoccupations of the ninth century. But those were of a different kind. Although in places like Wessex sites of Roman origin saw 'action and renewal' at the time of the Danish invasion,[317] the *burghs* were not cities (in the sense of Roman cities), and they have produced a small number of artefacts from the mid-Saxon period. This, the mid-Saxon shift, was the culmination of 'The Waning of Late Antiquity'. It stands in stark contrast with re-uses of the earlier period, where places like Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea and *Venta Icenorum* are also 'productive' sites, as metalwork has been found there.[318] We see it (earlier) also in Wales – none of the post-Roman defended settlements produced material culture after 700 and before 1080 (with one exception – Deganwy).[319] The art of re-use was changing.

4.4 Perceiving Roman Urban Spaces

If the symbolic relationship with the Roman infrastructure was so important, we need to look deeper into the perceptions of those spaces. To understand the role of urban space infrastructure for the societies and polities of Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain, we need to look into the ways infrastructure was perceived and described. In this, we can see interesting patterns emerging. Some of these patterns (like the use of the word *civitas*) have been long known. Others seem to have been under-researched in terms of re-use.

Bede, when talking about Roman urban spaces, wrote the history of Early Medieval polities in Britain as a history of Roman successor states. We can learn much from analysing when and how he used particular terms. James Campbell found a far-reaching correlation between the places that Bede called *civitates* and those that appear as such in the charters.[320] This vocabulary reflects a complicated relationship. Bede's way of intertwined

Medieval England, see: Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman Antiquity and the Sense of the Past in Anglo-Saxon England', 29–50.

316 Burch, Treveil, and Keene, *The Development of Early Medieval and Later Poultry and Cheapside*, 17–20.

317 Christie, 'Creating Defended Communities in Later Saxon Wessex', 56.

318 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 79.

319 Seaman, 'Defended Settlement in Early Medieval Wales', 43.

320 Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', 99–121.

thinking about history and geography can much be seen as being within the framework of Late Antique thought, even as its crowning achievement.[321]

Out of all usages of the word *civitas* in the charters, almost all pertain to cities or places of the Roman past (most of them in England, with two cases of Rome and one of Rouen). Three cases stand apart: Cricklade,[322] where there was a Roman ford, Chertsey,[323] where there was a Roman bridge, and Shaftesbury,[324] where there is nothing (apart from a late and completely mistaken tradition of *Caer Palladur*). All three of these places were monasteries, and the usage of *civitas* might refer here to the 'monastic city'. All of them are also considered at least partly spurious. This is a unique consistency, but inside that consistency there lies a more complicated relationship.

Let us look at the relationship between the Roman urban past and the use of *civitas* in three different contexts: In a witness list, in a boundary clause, and in a formula. One could assume that the usage of the term *civitas* reflects also the common attitude of the composers and the audience of the charter – admittedly a limited stratum of society. How much this was a conscious choice of words is evident from cases where there are two or more terms used. Looking at those choices can also make us better understand how the references to the Roman past evolved over large periods of time. In charter S525 (947), the archbishop of York, Wulfstan, was named 'Eborace ciuitatis archiepiscopus'.[325] But the bishop of London, next on the witness list, was called just a bishop 'Lundoniensis ecclesie'. The reference to the *Romanitas* of the see is a way of stressing precedence. There is a battle about the past in those two lines, and Wulfstan seems to have emerged as the winner, as a bishop of a post-Roman city, like any other in terms of his legitimization in the post-Roman West. We see that in the subscriptions of the council of Clovesho, where the bishops of cities with a Roman past made this clear by using the word *civitas*.[326] Contrary to the pessimistic view of Stuart Rigold,[327] not every walled Roman enclosure was always a *civitas* regardless of its functions or current symbolical use.[328] In the middle of the tenth century this reference had a very different context than references in the earliest charters. But the possibility to make it was not only a case

321 Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, 309.
322 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, II, no. 135 (S918).
323 *Charters of Chertsey Abbey*, no. 10 (S940).
324 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, I, no. 25 (S409).
325 *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, I, no. 40 (S525).
326 Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', 105.
327 Rigold, 'Litus Romanum', 70.
328 Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', 105–6.

of modelling yourself on contemporary Continental examples. In 947 in Britain Late Antiquity was long past, but the cultural and topographical field of reference it created was still a useful resource.

Those very late references are refreshing for us to look at, for they provide us, so to speak, with the fruits of the Late Antique labour of adaptation. A boundary clause from S1629 (923) mentions two Roman roads.[329] The memory of Roman urban space ('occidente ciuitas Dorobernie') was part of a landscape saturated with *Romanitas*. Boundary clauses had to be recognizable in the countryside: They were 'verbal descriptions that demarcate a plot of land'.[330] Therefore, using correct and recognizable vocabulary in their composition was crucial to their relevance and legitimacy. Charter S1091 (1042 x 1050) contains a popular formula ('infra ciuitatem et extra').[331] The city referenced is Canterbury, but the phrase was a formula of Roman law. There is a dual axis of reference here, both to the memory of Roman origins and to a present usage of Roman law. This usage was, so to speak, political with a clear vocabulary to serve a purpose. These late examples and the developments in legal and political worlds that they show, are important testimonies to the vitality of the Late Antique processes of adaptation.

These examples in isolation could be seen as purely coincidental. But their consistency gives us a hint that they could have been part of a wider naming convention. None of these 'civitates' actually resembled a late Roman metropolis. If we come back to our main chronological frame of reference we see that this usage is very early – already in the earliest single sheet charter considered broadly authentic, S8 from 679, the term 'actum in ciuitate Recuulf' appears.[332] Rochester is the only place that had enjoyed a significant Roman past, which Bede did not grace with the term *civitas*.[333] But the drafter of the charter was, directly or indirectly, conscious of that Roman baggage. Where the charter was executed also mattered – in this case in a Roman enclosure that was given to a Christian mission for a monastery. This is not a coincidence but a conscious tapping into the past as a resource. The act of giving the charter in the former Roman space is significant, especially from the point of view of legitimisation and administration. The

329 *Charters of Christ Church Canterbury*, no. 103 (S1629).

330 Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography*, 31.

331 The charter exists in Old English and Latin versions. The Old English phrase is 'wiðinne burhe and wiðutan'. Kelly views the Old English version as the authentic one, see: *The Charters of St Augustine's Abbey*, 128–29.

332 Fleming, 'Christ Church Canterbury's Anglo-Norman Cartulary', 108 (S8).

333 Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', 106.

vocabulary here mirrors the lay-ecclesiastical dynamic that permated the seventh century, and which we will explore further in the next chapter.

Some of that kind of thinking, and the correct association of the word *ceaster* – an Old English translation of *civitas* – can also be picked up in hagiography. *The Life of St Chad* for example correctly uses it throughout, as in phrases like 'lundoniscan cestre'.[334] Paradoxically, when describing places *outside* of Britain Old English hagiography tends to get sketchier and less consistent, sometimes using *burh* for Roman cities, like Arles.[335]

Vocabulary is a powerful thing. Nicholas Howe, when looking at the –ceastra place-names left in Early Medieval England, has written that 'traces of empire linger in language, even after colonizers have departed [...] [P]lace-names, at least some of them, remain on the land as testimony of the colonial past.'[336] Are those *civitates* former cities of the Roman Empire, stranded symbolically in the Early British world? Yes and no. As Anthony D. King has written, 'the category of the postcolonial city is more of an outsider's than an insider's label. It privileges a representation of the city which foregrounds its colonial past, rather than the city's present or future. In this sense, postcolonial can carry the meaning of the failure of decolonization. Is the once-colonial city destined to be forever postcolonial [...]?'[337] In this sense, the usage of the word *civitas* does exactly that: It stresses the past of the space, with sometimes little regard towards its present state; some, if not most, of the *civitates* were not even remotely cities. The question about their future remains relevant; those spaces had a chance to become something new, as York or Winchester or London did: Definitely not denying their Roman past, but no longer being solely defined by it. The relationship might not have been as strong as the relationship, for example, in Visigothic Spain, but it was nevertheless extremely important.[338] There, in the period of reoccupation, coming back to former Roman spaces like the city of Leon in the beginning of the tenth century, was much supported by tapping into their Roman past.[339]

At the same time, there is little doubt that casting the relationship of post-Roman societies in Britain inside such a dynamic might not be straightforward. While the postcolonial metaphor championed by Howe rings true,

334 *The Life of St. Chad*, l. 10.

335 *Life of St Giles*, l. 137.

336 Howe, 'Anglo-Saxon England and the Postcolonial Void', 32.

337 King, 'Postcolonial Cities', 322.

338 Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City*, 140–60. In Spain there are cities, like Cordoba, for which this relationship with the past, also through the transformation of the old Roman municipal offices, possibly lasted until the ninth century, see: Kulikowski, 'The Late Roman City in Spain', 142–43.

339 Gutierrez, 'The Other Iberian Peninsula: The Cities in Early Medieval Spain', 155–83.

it has its limits. Early Medieval Britain after the Augustinian mission was at the same time a space left by the Roman Empire and a province of Christian Rome. This makes it sometimes difficult to assess with certainty whether the usage of *civitas* might be simultaneously a memory of the past and an evocation of the present.[340] A powerful semantic link to the Roman past would undoubtedly present itself as a useful governance resource. Framing urban space (over which a ruler has power because of his Roman heritage) within Roman legacy lent part of that glow to the ruler.

Landscape vocabulary, which is part of what I would call a symbolic geography of Roman urbanism in the Early Medieval period, replicates this relationship. It references the past but also strengthens the present relationship of Early Medieval England with Rome. The situation is much more difficult in other cases where we do not find this kind of consistency, for example the term *vicus*. It can refer to settlements of both the Roman and non-Roman past, and appears to sometimes be a 'catch-all' term for an inhabited place, including villages.[341] Such fluid definition is consistent with what we observe on the Continent.[342] This shows that relying solely on the vocabulary might not always give us the answers, and might even, at times, be confusing. Nevertheless, work on the –wicham place-names has shown that both the name and the function of the *vici* might have been presented in those particular examples.[343] This seems to be oddly in line with what Jeremy Taylor remarked about the distinction between larger and smaller towns in the Roman period: '[T]he so-called small towns are a better indication of the development of an economy in which rural surplus production could be mobilized for exchange.'[344] In symbolic reference, in the Early Medieval period a similar (although not exactly corresponding) distinction might have persisted or re-surfaced at times.

The Late Antique and Early Medieval societies of Britain were, therefore, conscious of the language of space they were describing. They maintained,

340 The meaning of civitas was already problematic in sources like Notitia Galliarum, see: Scharf, *Der Dux Mogontiacensis und die Notitia Dignitatum*, 12–14; and Weise, 'Fränkischer Gau und römische Civitas im Rhein-Maingebiet', 97–103; in the Early Medieval period it could also fluctuate and depend strongly on the context, see: Rossignol, 'Civitas in Early Medieval Central Europe—Stronghold or District?', 71–99.

341 Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', 108–11. Charter S 148 referrs to Bath as a vicus. Charter S 171 referrs in such way to a royal estate.

342 Such terms are notoriously difficult to define in the Early Medieval context, see the terminological discussion in Nonn, *Pagus Und Comitatus in Niederlothringen*, 35–39.

343 Gelling, 'English Place-Names Derived from the Compound Wīchām'; Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Gentes and Regna', 396.

344 Taylor, *An Atlas of Roman Rural Settlement in England*, 118.

in the words of Rosamond McKitterick, a 'topographical emphasis' when using the past.[345] The transmission of that knowledge, which enabled the re-use of this particular kind, is much more difficult to solve. Few Latinised names of cities survive – for example in the kingdom of the Hwicce we have just Worcester – *Vertis*, Cirencester derived from *Corinium*, Gloucester from *Glevum*.[346] Even though insular Romance remained a language of communication for a period of time, the terms here discussed belong to a different register.[347] Additionally, the perception of time, of past and present, shaped the way in which Rome was related to.

This 'political' aspect of Roman urban space managed to seep into literature as well. We know that the Old English texts bound together the words *civitas* and *ceastre* – as evidenced by glosses in Aelfric's Colloquy where the Latin 'In civitate' is translated as 'On ceastra'.[348] Not only can the Roman city be a 'work of giants'. In poetry it is also a political concept, a governance resource for a king, like in Maxims II.[349] Howe has already pointed out that the connection here is more than just alliterative.[350] This relationship reflects a tangible phenomenon: The *ceaster* of the poem was an important part of the realm that the king must keep – a defended place, a place connected with royal authority. It was their governance resource. This example is far from isolated. The connection between the king and *ceaster* usually appears in conjunction with God and the heavenly city, as in the case of *Christ I*.[351] Here God as king leads people to his heavenly city. *Christ and Satan* (variously dated, but assumed to belong to the second part of the eighth century)[352] presents a similar image, when Satan conspires to drive 'the King' from 'his city'.[353] Also, the only mention of *ceaster* in Riddles appears in the context of heaven – 'rodera ceastre'– 'fortress of the heavens'.[354] These mentions tend to appear in places where the royal authority of God is declared.

All in all, poetry offers a complicated body of evidence. There is a distinction, a connection between the *ceaster* or *civitas* with its Roman past and

345 McKitterick, 'Transformations of the Roman Past', 240.
346 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 34.
347 Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', 373.
348 *Aelfric's Colloquy*, l. 97.
349 'Maxims II', in ASPR VI, 55–56.
350 Howe, 'Englalond and the Postcolonial Void', 85.
351 'Christ I', in ASPR III, ll. 576–581.
352 Finnegan, 'Language and Date', 56–64.
353 'Christ and Satan', in ASPR I, ll. 254–257.
354 'Riddle 59', in ASPR III, l. 15.

the royal or godly authority. Let us remember that the Old English names for cities come from the Latin *castrum*, and are a late Roman phenomenon. The examples are numerous and definitely more common in poetic texts. They might have also been influenced by factors of alliteration and composition, but they definitely strengthened the idea of *ceaster* being understood as something different, derived from the Roman past and at the same time connected to royal authority. It could, to a degree, reflect the processes of establishing royal authority over the walled urban enclosures, but other aspects are strongly at play here. *Ceaster* is simultaneously a poetic and a 'functional' city – this is not to say 'urban' in our sense, but a space that can be used for example symbolically or practically for defence. It is also often a heavenly city. Just like the Rome of the past and of the present, *ceaster* can have multiple meanings at once.

One poem has not yet been mentioned here, *The Ruin*.[355] Its image of a destroyed, dilapidated Roman city has contributed much to a skewed perception of the inhabitants of Early Medieval Britain seeing Roman urban spaces as foreign and useless – nothing more than inexplicable ruins of the past. *The Ruin* has been treated as almost a historical source, as describing reality, when it is a highly allegorical poem with its own set of goals.[356] Even if it does derive from an actual reality that the anonymous author(ess) saw (and I would strongly dispute that the 'baths' are the specific city of Bath, preferring a literary trope here), extrapolating the attitude towards Roman urban space from this single piece only. Interestingly, the poem in its surviving fragments does not use the word *ceaster*.

5. Conclusions

Roman urban space during and after the 'long fifth century' could be alive in many, sometimes non-obvious forms. Here we have attempted to sketch the approach of the polities and societies of Britain to Roman urban space from the end of the fourth to the middle of the eighth centuries (with forays as far as the tenth, mostly in charter evidence). Perhaps the most striking result of this inquiry is the extent of non-material use of Roman urban

355 'The Ruin', in ASPR III, 227–28.

356 Instead of presenting the destroyed city as a fleeting work of human endevour it might actually reflect on the brevity of human life in comparison with the still standing and virtually eternal, from the Old English perspective, remnants of a Roman city, see: Beaston, 'The Ruin and the Brevity of Human Life', 477–89.

infrastructure. Whether as part of symbolic geographies, as a source of legitimization and authority, or as a reference point, the former Roman cities managed to exert a strong pull on the governance and culture of polities and societies.

We have hopefully managed to break free from a binary continuity-discontinuity approach and have seen that the former Roman urban space in Britain of the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, far from being an empty, useless space, actually played a significant role both in local politics and in the work of the Augustinian mission and the British Church alike. Their strategies of using Roman urban space as a performative zone to bolster their authority must strike us as eerily similar.

The use of a charter as an administrative instrument profoundly changed the ends to which former Roman urban space could be used, allowing its activation as resources. The stabilisation of the written record enabled the disposal of space in new ways. First and foremost, it brought rulers the ability to influence ecclesiastical politics through grants of such space. Second, urban spaces became points of reference on another level, when their ownership or the ability to claim a connection with them became a way to stress a connection with the Roman past. The currency of such a connection has been downplayed in previous interpretations. It could, however, play an important role in ecclesiastical politics as evidenced by a great example of social infrastructure: The witness-lists of charters. Third, grants made inside former Roman urban spaces seemed at least to be worthy of being recorded as being made in those places, which hints at the continued importance of such spaces as places of law execution. The re-use of Roman remains was also a textual, cultural phenomenon.

Areas with a particularly high density of charters are not an evidence of break and discontinuity. Charters were an instrument directly rooted in late Roman legal tradition and allowed the actualisation of this connection with the Roman past. But they remained an innovation, because they were adapted. The proliferation of charters gave the polities of Britain a chance to fully develop their successor status. The changing of property boundaries and estate composition does not prove a break with the Roman past if that change was effected through an instrument that is the embodiment of Roman provincial administrative tradition, and if inside the framework of that instrument Roman remains were used in a conscious way. There is a greater performance *Romanitas* in the ability to reorganise land in such a manner than in keeping fossilised estate continuity. There were breaks and discontinuities, of course. But the Roman period was full of them, with the third century bringing large-scale reorganisation to many Roman towns

in Britain. We overstate and overemphasise the stability and peacefulness in the late Roman Empire as compared to the post-Roman period.[357] There was no break in contacts and traditions of the post-Roman West, but large-scale regionalisation and adaptation, which impacted the ability of successor polities to make use of the resources at their disposal. If we see Merovingian Francia as a direct successor of the Roman administration (which can hardly be disputed as a notion, although can be discussed in its particularities),[358] then the political interest of the Continental powers in at least some of those regions of post-Roman Britain also continued almost without a break. It is through this adaptation strategy, that eventually, in a paradox that we keep encountering on the pages of this story, removed the Roman distinction and ushered a new one. Britain's institutional and physical infrastructure remained part of the Roman world even though it was no longer a part of the empire.

The changed nature of urban spaces has its roots in late Roman phenomena. The transformation of the methods of use of urban spaces was not a manifestation of Britain's departure from the post-Roman West, but a particular manifestation of processes known to us elsewhere, from Gaul and North Afirca alike. Even such 'British' phenomena as the evacuation of cities to hill-forts might have actually been rooted in Roman tradition.

The high level of regionalisation and the differing fates of urban space were caused by varied trajectories of ownership and legal status of those spaces in the Late Roman period. These transitions, as we have seen through the analysis of Gildas' terminology and the modes of ownership of walled enclosures, to a certain extent appear to have occured inside the framework of late Roman Law. We can see how the later leaders of Early Medieval polities of Britain continued (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly) the task of the late Roman administration in what turned out to be vastly changed circumstances. The administration of urban spaces was yet another iteration of the successor state status. This chapter tried to bring our focus onto those *adaptations* of the Roman world instead of trying to battle for *continuities* of it, and to argue that what made the polities of post-Roman Britain essentially successor polities was precisely this ability to transform and make use of former urban spaces. *Romanitas* was (and remains) a construct, and its survival can only be judged on the merit of how well it was performed.

357 For the research framework of violence in Late Antiquity see Drake, *Violence in Late Antiquity* and Halsall, *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*.

358 Hen, *Roman Barbarians*.

IV. Spaces: The Church and What Rome Left

1. Tinkering with the Past: the Church and the Inheritance of Rome

This chapter will begin with an analogy. Imagine a village church, one of those quiet, old buildings hidden in the countrysides of so many countries. It slowly transforms, with subsequent generations of priests securing, with varying success, funds for architectural changes. As decades and then centuries pass the edifice starts to acquire additions and alterations in different styles. It is still the same church! It just looks very different. A trained eye will discern were the original features are still to be recognised under layers of plaster, where the new windows were cut and the old ones given a new form. But given enough time the original structure might be almost impossible to discern. The parish priest securing support from lay and ecclesiastical actors stands, as you might have already discerned, for the Church in post-Roman and Early Medieval Britain. Through cooperation with other actors it facilitated the process of adaptation and while being (both in the case of the British and the 'Augustinian' Church) most definitely an emodiement of Roman practice, it inadvertedly led to a progressive loss of distinction. By continuing its Roman and imperial role, the Church moved Britain further from the empire but closer to the post-Roman world.

A significant amount of literature about the connection between the Church and the Roman past is already available. John Blair has made a convincing case for the central role of minsters in the landscape post-650. His work on the role of Rome and Roman towns and forts for the development of Christianity in Early Medieval England remains one of the best surveys of the topic written to date.[1] I would like to, when applicable, direct this chapter towards elements unexplored, or where room for other interpretations exists. I will focus on two phenomena as my case studies: The role of the Church in taking over Roman infrastructure and its re-use, and the role of the Church as a creator of governance on the basis of the Roman infrastructure, with a particular focus on the symbolic power that this infrastructure conferred. The Church had a profound role in economic processes of the Early Middle Ages – it is difficult to analyse them without taking this into account.[2]

1 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*.

2 See Moreland's plea to enrich Wickham's analysis of Early Medieval Britain with the role of the Church: Moreland, 'Land and Power from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England?', 188–89.

Multiple factors were at play in this process. Regionalisation was one of the key features of the sub-Roman period in Britain, with special emphasis on frontier regions, which seems to be in-line with the developments in other parts of the Empire.[3] In regions where we have at our disposal larger sets of sources that we can use as a comparison, like the Lower Danube, we can see that the Church was already active in maintaining local government from the fifth century onwards.[4] This fragmentation seems to have been one of the defining factors in guaranteeing a form of stability of governance. Not surprisingly, we observe here an adaptation strategy.

The Church was a crucial element in the process of adaptation. Its actions provided a tension between the maintainance of distinction and adaptation to progressively different circumstances. Apart from an interest in re-use, it also occupied a central role in preserving the memory of many elements of Roman infrastructure, not only through scattered mentions in hagiographies or in works like Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but perhaps most importantly in the charters. Used as delineation and demarcation elements, their existence was recorded as a by-product of the massive land-acquiring process on which the Church embarked.[5] Charters, as documents of a secular-ecclesiastical interface, played a key role. The Church was also perhaps the biggest activating actor of the Early Middle Ages in Britain: It commanded both the necessary resources and the bureaucratic expertise allowing it to activate former Roman infrastructures into useful governance resources.

2. Law and Space

2.1 Regulating the Role of the Church

Probably one of the keys to cracking the code of the Church's involvement in maintaining and re-using Roman infrastructure, be it transport

3 Dumville, 'The Idea of Government in Sub-Roman Britain', 176.

4 Poulter, 'The Use and Abuse of Urbanism in the Danubian Provinces during the Later Roman Empire', 132.

5 This acquisition was not a straightforward process of a transfer of property. It resulted in a complicated network of connections and dependencies. For the anthropological perspective see the influential study: Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*; and the classic book, originally published in 1925: Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*; in the Early Medieval context the following collection of essays on the meanings of gift is extremely helpful: Davies and Fouracre, eds., *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*; and in this particular ecclesiasitcal context two crucial pieces by Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400–750'; and Wood, *The Transformation of the Roman West*.

infrastructure, cities, or places of worship, lies in its legal position. Patrick Wormald's argument about the increasing role and position of bishops as royal power weakened in Kent is a case in point.[6] An argument can be made that such a growing position enabled the Church to gain influence in the power structures and economy, and therefore also a freer and more empowered hand in the process of reactivating Roman governance resources.

The Church enjoyed a strong position in the earliest extant laws in eastern Early Medieval Britain. The Laws of Aethelberht are built on a hierarchical structure, from the top to the bottom of society, from the king to the servants.[7] But the provisions for the Church and public assembly take precedence.[8] Moreover, theft from the Church was to be compensated 12-fold, while theft from the king only 9-fold.[9] The Laws of Wihtred guaranteed an exemption of the Church from taxation, and in the prologue made the position of its privileges equal with that of the king himself, including the bishops of Canterbury and Rochester.[10] A comparison of exemptions included in the Law of Wihtred with the S20 charter from 699 is interesting.[11] It reiterates the exemption from tax, but obtaining a charter with such exemptions was still seen as worthwhile, even though a law was promulgated stating similar provisions. Such a move points towards the very different roles of those early law codes: They have served as distinction markers for the Church. It seeked a position in line with the one it had in the rest of the post-Roman West and did that through legal means. Thus, the institutional infrastructure of Britain could be well recognised as part of this world.

The Laws of Wihtred include elements of the laws of the Church in its structure, showing the growing influence of the institution.[12] While in the case of the Laws of Aethelberht we are dealing with mostly oral law being put in to writing (with the position of the Church added to it as a form of superstructure), the Laws of Wihtred explicitly reserved a strong place

6 Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 97.

7 On structure and its derivation from written tradition, see Oliver, *The Beginnings of English Law*, 35–38.

8 'The Laws of Aethelberht', paras 1–7.

9 'The Laws of Aethelberht', para. 1 and 10.

10 'The Laws of Wihtred', paras 1–2.

11 An authentic charter, its earliest copy comes from the ninth century, but probably reflects faithfully the seventh century original, see: Kelly, *The Charters of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, and Minster-in-Thanet*, 40–44 (S20).

12 'The Laws of Wihtred', paras 10–17.

for the Church. Throughout the seventh century, the ecclesiastical legal position was progressively reinforced. Early Medieval Britain experienced a process seen on the Continent at the same time: The acquisition of land by the Church and subsequent strengthening of its legal station. While for Aethelberht the strong ecclesiastical position (and issuing a legal code in the first place)[13] was essentially a means of sustaining support,[14] in the Laws of Wihtred the Church stands on its own.

A debate over what extent the provisions of Wihtred are a response, a form of legal remedy, or a proactive move on the part of the king, are crucial to understand the extent that such high position of the Church was a legal reality. It appears that although early legal codes in Eastern Britain did have a responsive element, Wihtred's legislation was driven by the desire to strengthen the position of the Church.[15]

2.2 Acquiring and Granting Space

To give freely, one has to have or be able to convince others that one has something to give. At some point in the post-Roman period, Roman walled space seems to have become the property of the king, at least in Kent, free for him to dispose of. We can assume this because when charters finally appeared in the seventh century, rulers seem to have been the chief actors in organising this space and deciding its fate.[16] In order to understand the roots of this process we need to establish how probable was a Roman framework for this process. There is a tendency to impose a 'desire for *Romanitas*'[17] or 'respect for *Romanitas*' on immediate post-Roman societies in Britain.[18] As much as this of course cannot be ruled out, such statements might seem exaggerated: '"Roman" is an idea, and ideas are understood in different ways by different people [...] *Romanitas* is a moveable feast.'[19] In the immediate post-Roman phase we are examining largely disputable territory. The situation only becomes clearer with the advent of the Augustinian mission. In the fifth century, there were already tentative hints, such as the presence of churches built by the residual population of

13 'After a Roman manner', 'exempla Romannorum', as Bede writes, HE II.5.

14 Although here also the Church was instrumental, see: Lendinara, 'The Kentish Laws', 211–30.

15 Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, 78.

16 Which was explicitly *not* the case in many other regions of the post-Roman West which followed a different trajectory of adaptation.

17 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 107.

18 Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, 227.

19 Creighton, *Britannia: The Creation of a Roman Province*, 77.

at least four forts on Hadrian's Wall, showing various degrees of continued occupation and maintenance.[20] Thus we can see these adaptation strategies as a conscious desire for *Romanitas* but not some kind of lofty idea of Rome; rather a very practical, down-to-earth, '*Romanitas* on the ground'. Britain remained rocognizably part of the post-Roman world in the Early Middle Ages not through sweeping grand-scale references but through a multitude of small shards of the empire. *Romanitas* in Britain meant a multitude of Romes.

We are skewed by the available evidence, but there is a tangible link between Roman military infrastructure and the Church in Britain. The need to problematise this relationship has been noted before – e.g., stressing the symbolic rather than the pragmatic value of such a connection in the context of East Anglia,[21] or exploring the role of the Church in exploiting Roman roads for trade.[22] If we are to see the Church as the main agent taking over Roman infrastructure as a governance resource, then we should expect its most complete embodiment in monastic foundations. Not surprisingly then a number of Roman military outposts, among them chiefly Saxon Shore forts, were being converted into missionary settlements and minster sites early in the seventh century.[23]

How did it come to pass that the kings had the space at their disposal in the first place? The ownership of defended places (including those walled cities that had already been largely depopulated) and surrounding territory might have originated in the post-Roman context, in the ownership rights bestowed in the leaders of the *foederati*.[24] They might have taken over the possession of the forts and walled spaces they defended, and possibly also of the 'agri limitotrophi' and 'agri limitanei' (fields designated to supply the troops) around them.[25] Contrary to the view that this was an isolated British phenomenon, it fits into a wider trend of important armies changing into

20 Collins, 'Military Communities and Transformation of the Frontier Form the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries', 24–25; the discovery in August 2020 of a possible fifth/sixth century liturgical vessel in Vindolanda seems to confirm the existence of another one, see: https://www.vindolanda.com/news/unique-christian-artefact-uncovered-at-vindolanda [accessed 4 September 2020]. There is still a lot to learn about the Christian communities in post-Roman Britain.

21 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 54.

22 Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, *c.* 650–750: Trade, Industry and the Rise of Mercia', 22, 31.

23 Christie, 'Creating Defended Communities in Later Saxon Wessex', 62.

24 This in turn might have been connected with the aquisition of land by the limitanei. For an overview of this process and its consequences in the Carolingian period see: Bachrach, 'Military Lands in Historical Perspective', esp. 96-102.

25 Liebeschuetz, 'The End of the Roman Army in the Western Empire', 275.

retinues and taking over the ownership of the land assigned to them.[26] Later laws (from the 420s) confirm that such land was the right of the soldiers and commanders of the forts. That those laws were confirmations shows that this right was already an established practice and that those regulations could reach Britain early enough – i.e., before the complete breakdown of Roman administration. The laws themselves focus on forts, mentioning 'castellorum loca', but they fail to mention cities explicitly.[27] Therefore, if these laws were applied to urban enclosed spaces, those must have been depopulated or nearly depopulated, or initially were focused on smaller settlements. Already a constitution from 409 directed to Gaudentius, the vicar of Africa, stated that land given to the *gentiles* as remuneration for their military service should be returned to them if somebody else had taken it. If not returned, the current owners should themselves take care of defence obligations.[28] The constitution makes clear that this was an existing practice and an existing problem. I tend to disagree with the opinion that it is just the peculiar, African context that was addressed here, but I find an interesting parallel in the exegesis pointing out that the troops were *not* called *limitanei* but *gentiles*.[29] This might have had consequences in the British context, as we shall see. That Britain was a major corn-supplying region (just as Africa was, although no doubt on a different scale) surfaces over and over again, as in the account of Julian's campaigns by Ammianus.[30]

A later constitution from 423 regulated the ownership of buildings and enclosed spaces erected or owned by soldiers on such land, again *confirming* their perpetual right of ownership.[31] It is interesting that the weakening of the Roman administration in Britain happened at a time when imperial constitutions seemed to confirm their soldiers' right of ownership to land. It is less important in this context if these laws were received directly in Britain (at least until the 440s such possibility existed), because they all seem to *remedy* the appropriation of land that should be rightfully owned by soldiers around (and as I posit *inside*) walled enclosures by private persons.

26 Liebeschuetz, 'The End of the Roman Army in the Western Empire', 269.

27 *The Codex of Justinian*, bks 11.60.1-3. Interestingly, Gildas, ch. 3, when describing Britain writes that the island has towns (civitates) and numerous forts (castella). To what extent this reflects a real distinction is problematic.

28 *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, bk. 7.15.1.

29 Isaac, 'The Meaning of Limes and Limitanei in Ancient Sources', 375–76.

30 Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, bk.18.2.3. I am very grateful to James Harland for the discussions we had about this phenomenon.

31 *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, bk. 2.23.1.

In other words, ownership by other agents was an aberration – ownership by soldiers was increasingly seen as standard.

This process should not be seen simply as privatizing landownership by the Roman army. If we keep a more open view of adaptation and transformation istead of continuity/discontinuity then we can interpret this, very much legally framed process, as attributing additional administrative duties to the Roman army. It was not a process of abolishing Roman administrative control or of creating a peasant militia.[32] There is direct archeological evidence of the Roman military actors taking a more prominent role in the ownership of the supply chain in Britain, especially in the frontier regions, which became more localised.[33] This process has been successfully recast as an example of an adaptation preserving the interaction with the local community in light of an economic decline and political turmoil.[34] We should therefore see those transformations not as a process of pirvatization but of adaptation, which progressively removes the distinction, but does so through tangibly Roman means. We again see how Britain moved away from the direct orbit of the empire propelled by imperial means.

The argument can be taken further: The sheer size of the walled enclosures of late Roman Britain, constructed from the middle of the third century onwards, makes it possible to speculate that they were meant to include some portion of *agri limitotrophi* and *agri limitanei* inside them (as opposed for example to Gaul, where only the kernel of the city was usually walled).[35] In Britain this had allowed the commanders and soldiers to acquire, still within Roman legal system, ownership of the land *inside* walled enclosures – forts and cities alike.

This does not mean that the leaders of seventh-century polities were direct successors of these soldiers and commanders – although the commanders must have been on a blurred line between a Roman officer and a warlord, and with the slow disappearance of the Roman state apparatus that distinction might have also disappeared.[36] They might have therefore inherited rights that they had as army officers, but under circumstances that were becoming radically different.[37] I even doubt that there was any

32 Isaac, 'The Meaning of Limes and Limitanei in Ancient Sources', 376.

33 Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire,* 74-112.

34 Kolbeck, 'A Foot in Both Camps: The Civilian Suppliers of the Army in Roman Britain', 10.

35 Butler, 'Late Roman Town Walls in Gaul'.

36 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 251, 253; see also Wijnendaele, 'Sarus the Goth'.

37 One is reminded of the passage by Procopius describing the 'Arborychi' in which he describes the Roman soldiers that remained after the withdrawal of the Empire in Gaul and preserved their customs and even elements of their military organisation: 'Now other Roman soldiers,

unbroken line of property ownership here.[38] But a hypothesis can be made that the initial change of purpose and usage of some of the defended Roman cities and forts in the fifth century happened inside the framework of late Roman law. If indeed this was the case, it could help us understand some of the phenomena connected with this process. For example, dark earth deposits (for so long used in archaeological interpretations to prove rapid dilapidation of Roman cities in Britain) might represent farming by members of the retinue who received land inside the defended enclosure. If, as Eric John has proposed, the tradition of charter-making was a Roman Vulgar Law[39] tradition and represented an 'insular equivalent of that early reception of Roman law from which [...] [is] derived the early tenurial law of the barbarian kingdoms',[40] this would explain why the royal ownership of walled spaces (especially urban spaces) was, at least superficially, unchallenged by other actors in South-East England in the Early Middle Ages. It was unchallenged because the leaders of polities derived their right of ownership from those military regulations. Further emulation of Merovingian kingship, of seeing yourself as an inheritor of the Roman administrators, might have only strengthened their hand – at a convergence of two adaptation strategies.

also, had been stationed at the frontiers of Gaul to serve as guards. And these soldiers, having no means of returning to Rome, and at the same time being unwilling to yield to their enemy who were Arians, gave themselves, together with their military standards and the land which they had long been guarding for the Romans, to the Arborychi and Germans; and they handed down to their offspring all the customs of their fathers, which were thus preserved, and this people has held them in sufficient reverence to guard them even up to my time. For even at the present day they are clearly recognized as belonging to the legions to which they were assigned when they served in ancient times, and they always carry their own standards when they enter battle, and always follow the customs of their fathers. And they preserve the dress of the Romans in every particular, even as regards their shoes.' Procopius, *History of the Wars. Books V – VI.15*, bk. V.12.16-17; one has to look at the passage critically, but it might contain an echo of actual practices, see: MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*, 121–22; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850*, 79–80; moreover, those Arborychi could have been, at least partly, immigrants from Britain, see: Sivan, 'The Appropriation of Roman Law in Barbarian Hands', 197.

38 In fact there probably was none. Members of the 'elite' groups changed between Late Antique and Early Medieval periods: Faith, 'Forces and Relations of Production in Early Medieval England', 29. This does not have to mean that the systems from which they profited did not exhibit elements or features of continuity. New elites could have benefited from old Roman systems of property of ownership. Succesful adaptation requires at least some durability of methods.

39 Understood as 'the law applied in the practice of the Roman provincials of that period, presenting itself as an evolution or, if one prefers, a degeneration of pure Roman law,' Levy, *West Roman Vulgar Law: The Law of Property*, 2.

40 John, *Land Tenure in Early England*, 15, 23.

Maybe paying more attention to such possible origins of the landholding in Early Medieval Britain is more productive than sticking to the various definitions of what the scarcely attested term folcland was. What we see in the charter tradition later on might reflect a complicated and confusing (also to its immediate users) legal landscape.[41] If the legal standing of a charter in the pre-Viking period indeed 'was constructed through the process of dispute settlement' then the relatively undisputed status of the walled enclosures in the written record might hint at their special status.[42] They are a remnant of Rome not only in their physicality but also in their standing.

Such acquired space formed the basis of grants that the Church started receiving from the beginning of the seventh century. There is nothing unusual here apart from the chronology – just as on the Continent, the Church became the successor of Roman state property; it simply happened slightly later.[43]

Continental parallels for the exceptional status of the walled enclosures also exist, making the developments in Britain in step with the rest of the post-Roman world. Already in the sixth century on the Continent monasteries were founded in Roman enclosures by or with the agreement of Merovingian kings, with a dramatic increase in the seventh.[44] Roman walled spaces were seen as a convenient place to found a monastery in the Continental tradition.[45] Luxeuil, founded by Columbanus, is just one striking example of a monastery taking advantage of a small town and a nearby walled space[46] (it surely received royal consent).[47] For Merovingian kings, monastic patronage was a political tool, allowing them to shape the

41 Ryan, '"Charters in Plenty"'.

42 Ryan, '"Charters in Plenty"', 30.

43 The process has seen its apogee on the Continent in the sixth century, see Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400–750', esp. 41-46.

44 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, 191.

45 Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, 119–20.

46 See Bully and Picard, 'Mensa in Deserto: Reconciling Jonas's Life of Columbanus with Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Annegray and Luxeuil', 119–43. The excavations conducted by Bully have confirmed that the monastery at Luxeuil took advantage of a rich late- and post-Roman landscape, contradicting Jonas' account of it being a deserted place, and proved there was a rich culture of re-use on the site. A castrum has not been found on the site of Annegray (the first, 'stop-gap' location of the monastery) but Luxeuil itself was a Roman settlement. The previous, Christian, Late Antique topography of Luxeuil points out that the monastery was founded inside a thriving community. At least one of the churches found on the site was a funerary church, most definitely outside the walls of the settlement, but the monastery might have indeed spanned parts of the walled space.

47 *Vitae Columbani Abbatis Discipulorum Eius Libri II*, bk. I.10.

landscape of power in their favour.[48] It is possible that the same reasons applied for kings in Eastern Britain, and the example of Reculver confirms this assumption. In 669, the site of Reculver – the former Roman fort of *Regulbium* – was given by Ecgberht for the foundation of a monastery, as noted in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: 'Her Ecgbriht cing sealde Basse mæssepreoste Raculf mynster on to timbrianne.'[49]

It has been noted that the whole foundation was the king's response to the appointment of Theodore of Tarsus as the archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Vitalian, and was meant to serve as a 'local' counterpart to the newcomer's taking control of Canterbury.[50] Beyond the practical choice of an existing enclosure – with ready-made building material that was indeed used in the construction of the church – there was a much more powerful reason. Ecgberht was, essentially, playing an ideological game, and he used one of the most powerful governance resources that he had at his disposal – a former Roman enclosed space – to assert his authority, his connection to the Roman past, and his status as the ruler of what was essentially a successor state. In other words, he used the monastic foundation in the same way as the Merovingian kings had.[51] Other examples of such grants in Roman forts occurred also in Burgh Castle (possibly the site of Cnobheresburg, an important Hiberno-Scottish Christian mission)[52] or Walton Castle, and numerous other sites,[53] as well as in the western part of Britain. Far from insignificant and accidental, those grants were of ideological and symbolical importance.

The charter evidence seems to be hinting at similar royal ownership also of the walled Roman urban space. In order to examine this

48 Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, 49.

49 ASC, s.a. 669; 'Here King Egbert gave Reculver to Bass the mass-priest in which to build a minster,' Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 34.

50 Kelly, 'Reculver Minster and Its Early Charters', 71–72.

51 Which should not surprise us considering the political involvement of the Merovingians in South-West Britain but also numerous contacts of insular clerics and queens with Merovingian monasteries on the Continent, see: Wood, 'Quentovic et le Sud-Est Britannique', 167–71. Merovingian influence on the east insular monasticism was widespread and can be seen in such places as Hexham, Ripon, Wearmouth and Jarrow, Bath, Barking and Lyminge: Wood, 'Merovingian Monasticism and England', 17–25. Places like Bath or Malmesbury kept close contacts with the Continent, making extensive use of port infrastructure: Wood, 'Monasteres et ports dans l'Angleterre du VIIe-VIIIe siècle', 96. Some monasteries, like Reculver, could have been placed strategically in locations enabling better contacts with the Continent through the use of Roman infrastructure (in this case: a fort): Wood, 'Monasteres', 91. This is a great example of how social infrastructures, propped by physical infrastructures, continued to maintain the usual ways of contact, active already in the Roman period.

52 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 56–60.

53 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 53.

proposition, we have to come back to the sequence of charters discussed in the roads chapter in the context of the transport network. The sequence of charters S34 (765),[54] S266 (761 altered to 781),[55] S32 (762),[56] S131 (789),[57] and S339 (868)[58] documents a series of grants inside the walled space of Rochester. This sequence should actually begin with the infamous S1 (604), which has been hotly contested in terms of authenticity, especially by Wilhelm Levison and Anton Scharer discussed in detail in chapter II.[59] This is an extensive list of grants. It does not include charters giving properties outside of the former urban space, although it is sometimes unclear from the text where exactly the grant lies. From this list we see how over the course of a hundred (or with the inclusion of S1, two hundred) years the ownership of Rochester's walled area moved into the hands of the Church. This in turn shows that the kings of Kent and in the later phase Wessex retained the ownership and authority over this former Roman urban space and the right to give it away. Maybe even more interesting is how this process happened in a progressively changing legal landscape.

Another interesting case is Lyminge, which involves numerous features of the 'ecclesiastic takeover' set – re-use of the Roman tradition, female royal connection, and imitation of Roman building techniques. The name of Lyminge preserves a Celtic root, and a Roman villa and possibly a Roman temple have been hypothesised,[60] although recent archaeological excavations seem to disprove the presence of substantial amounts of Romano-British material.[61] The royal site that immediately preceded the monastery was in some form drawing its legitimation from the Roman past –recent excavations have uncovered evidence of pseudo *opus signinum* floor in one of the royal

54 Seen as genuine: Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum', 123–24.

55 A complicated case, that might involve an inclusion of the original Kentish charter in a later, ninth century charter from Wessex. For the problems of authenticity and the dating of this document, see: Campbell, *Charters of Rochester*, xiv, xxiii.

56 An authentic grant, gaining the confidence even of the ever skeptical Scharer: Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 222–24.

57 An authentic document, see: *Charters of Rochester*, xxiii.

58 Even though the boundary clause might be a later addition, the document seems to follow Canterbury formulation, see: *Charters of Rochester*, xxv–xxvi; Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 169–70.

59 Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, 59–60; Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, 223–25.

60 Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England*, 20.

61 Thomas, 'Monasteries and Places of Power in Pre-Viking England: Trajectories, Relationships and Interactions', 103.

halls.[62] *Opus signinum* was a form of Roman flooring made out of crushed tiles, found in Early Medieval England exclusively in monastic contexts.[63]

In 633, King Eadbald purportedly gave the estate to his sister Aethelburh, freshly widowed wife of Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria.[64] The tradition of the 633 foundation, and Aethelburh's association, has been put into question, with alternative theories pointing towards the refunding of a royal mortuary chapel.[65] The charter evidence appears relatively late, but there is archaeological evidence that the monastic foundation took place in the fourth decade of the seventh century with the building of a 'Romanizing'-style church.[66] Aethelburh was an extremely important figure of the early seventh century, with a reputation and political clout on a scale that prompted Pope Boniface V to write letters to her with instructions on the mission in Northumbria.[67] Her position seems to be similar to that of her mother Bertha, with a strong Merovingian connection. After the death of Edwin, Aethelburh sent her children to Dagobert I in Francia for fear of Eadbald and Oswald.[68] In acquiring the royal estate in Lyminge, we can see here a process not dissimilar from the passing of Roman walled enclosures to the hands of monastic communities. We know that at least a part of the estate was also productive in character, as in charter S12 from 689 Oswine granted iron-bearing land 'quod pertinebat ad cortem que appellatur Liminge' to St Augustine, Canterbury.[69] There seems to have been a direct connection between the high status of the estate, its Roman tradition, and the interest of royal females with strong Merovingian links. Aethelburh might have acquired the royal estate in her widowhood as a security, based on her royal lineage in Kent. Once again, we see how the story of the adaptation and distinction of Roman infrastructure in Britain is a gendered one.

62 It is significant, because together with the evidence uncovered at Dover it shows that Kent had a distinct trajectory in the conversion period – the imitation of Roman techniques and buildings was not confined to ecclesiastical buildings but also permeated the secular realm, showing the desire to perform *Romanitas* among Kentish rulers and aristocracy, see: Thomas, 'Monasteries and Places of Power in Pre-Viking England: Trajectories, Relationships and Interactions', 111, 113. It is an important argument for the conscious desire of rulers of those polities to be seen as *Nachfolger* of the Roman Empire.

63 Pitts, 'Where Anglo-Saxon Halls Home to Kings?', 8.

64 Piggott and Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 391.

65 Kelly, 'Lyminge Minster and Its Early Charters', 98–113.

66 Thomas, 'Monasteries and Places of Power in Pre-Viking England', 110. The seventh century church was found in 2019 confirming the Aethelburh foundation, see https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1242122 [accessed: 27 April 2020].

67 HE, bk. II.11.

68 HE, bk. II.20.

69 *The Charters of St Augustine's Abbey*, no. 8.

These monastic foundations would not, of course, be politically inert. They served as important nodes on the power map of Britain, serving as economic centres and places where governance could be performed.[70] The estate was fragmented, as we know from S12, but a series of grants from the beginning of the eighth century shows that it was still a significant site, and that kings retained portions of land there.[71] The monastery of Lyminge played a role in the dynamic of the region from the eighth century onwards, influencing the social and economic structure.[72] Perhaps in this way it has continued the role played by the Roman estate, then by the early royal one. Infrastructural control of the hinterland is also a form of re-use, a practical one, with perhaps much greater influence on the community than just the re-use of buildings or tracts.

There were more of those places that directly re-used Roman infrastructural resources, but as the analysis of the post-Viking survival of 'identifiable continuity' shows, we have lost most East Anglian examples and large portions of the Northumbrian ones.[73] Now, I have warned before against extrapolating regional phenomena into the wider context of Britain. This also applies here – just the example of Chester discussed in the previous chapter shows that in other parts of Britain the ownership of urban space gained a different trajectory. But in south-western Britain, in Kent and possibly parts of East Anglia, former Roman urban spaces and walled enclosures seem to have been parts of the royal demesne. It is hard to find a solid legal basis for this, but it is tempting to bind that to the period of Merovingian dominance,[74] around the arrival of the Augustinian mission, with possible roots in the immediate post-Roman period and the radical change of ownership described above. This is, again, a highly regionalised process.

3. Symbolical Geographies

3.1 The 'Christian Foundation Legend' and Roman Remains

In order to better understand how important Roman infrastructure was for the political, ecclesiastical and cultural landscape of Britain let us now

70 Oosthuizen, *Tradition and Transformation*, 183-184.

71 Look charter S23.

72 Gabor Thomas, 'Life before the Minster: The Social Dynamics of Monastic Foundation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent', 109–45.

73 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 296.

74 Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea*.

zoom in, still focussing on Kent. Through careful unpacking of the various layers available in documentary and archaeological evidence we can better appreciate the role of Roman infrastructure in the building of what we can call the 'Christian foundation legend of Kent', interspersed in the texts of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, and brought together by Bede. This term, 'Christian foundation legend', is used here to describe a set of texts that give the Christian rulers of Eastern Britain a footing in the wider post-Roman tradition and history.

It all starts with a letter. In the letter to Bertha, Queen of Kent, Gregory the Great equates her with Helena, mother of Constantine.[75] She is there seen as the spiritual mother of the mission of Augustine, and maybe even of the whole Church in England. But Helena was not only mother to an emperor, she was also a restorer of the Holy Places, a woman responsible for recovering the Holy Cross and bringing it back to its rightful material context of a church. In the Eusebian tradition, she is also an empress-restorer of at least two actual churches: The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, and the Church of Eleona on the Mount of Olives.[76] Helena acted of course on the authority of the Church and for its benefit, and so we can also see and place Bertha's activity.[77] This identification with Helena has its parallels in the Continental tradition as well, with similar roles being ascribed to Radegund, Queen of the Franks (*c.* 520-587).[78] The intellectual investment present in this letter is enormous.

Together with Bertha's Helena in the letters of Gregory we also find Aethelbert's Constantine, the 'enabler' of the power of the true Church, but also the one who helped eradicate heresies.[79] His role as a builder of churches is recognised in the Eusebian tradition as well. Their work together is to 'convince the English people' to Christianity. Bede supplements this, and binds it into an internally coherent ideological structure, by making

75 GPRE II, bk. 11.35.

76 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, chap. XLI–XLIV.

77 St Helen as a dedication had a great significance in re-using Roman remains for the foundation of churches. At least two churches dedicated to Helena that we know of were made on Roman foundations or in the context of Roman infrastructural remains. St Helen-on-the-Walls, York was build on top of Roman masonry of a townhouse, and under the church, during the excavations in 1970 a Roman mosaic female head (possibly Medusa) was found, which could have been retro-interpreted by the Early Medieval builders of the church as Helena herself, see: Magilton and Addyman, *The Archaeology of York: Church of St. Helen-on-the-Walls*. The second example is St Helen in Colchester, build probably originally by Offa inside the precinct of the Roman amphitheatre, see: Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 380.

78 Hahn, 'Collector and Saint', 269–71.

79 GPRE II, bk. 11.37.

Bertha a restorer of churches[80] and Aethelberht a builder of churches.[81] Infrastructure was also important. They are buried in a unifying place – the chapel of St Martin, in the church of St Peter and Paul in Canterbury. This church was not founded by either of them but by Augustine (who is in Bede's narration both a restorer and a builder), the missionary of the 'true', Roman Church. This 'Christian origin legend' of Bede, drawn from the letters of Pope Gregory and oral tradition, framed by the imperial parallels of Helena and Constantine, uses the restoration of Roman infrastructure – of Roman churches in this case – as their foundation credentials. There is of course an elephant in this church – the British Church. Through these parallels, Bede establishes the primate of the Roman Church over the British Curch, the silent background character of Bede's story, and the special position of the Church *contra* secular, even royal authority. How strong this narrative of Bede was, stressing the importance of the 'right' ecclesiastical guidance, can be seen in the twelfth-century manuscript copy of the laws of Aethelberht which was prefaced as 'given in the time of Augustine'.[82]

At the same time, Bede goes the extra mile in explaining that Aethelberht did not force anybody to convert.[83] Why is that? Bede knew perfectly well that the mission was not entirely successful and did not move speedily enough. Fortunately, such an image could be easily reconciled with the image of Constantine. It has been suggested that his narrative actually reflects the limited impact that the kings had on the process of conversion.[84] In other words Bede is trying to use the source material that he has at his disposal – the letters of Gregory – to conceal the relative powerlessness of the early royals. The powerful imagery of Helena and Constantine was a tool that Bede did not shy from using in other contexts, especially in his own, Northumbrian milieu. One example is King Oswald (*c.* 605-642). Bede's stylisation of Oswald as Constantine was in all probability his own doing, unprompted by contemporary texts.[85] Comparying rulers to Roman Emperors became an activity with a solid pay-off.

Bede wanted Roman infrastructure to be the ideological possession of the successors of the Augustinian mission. He wanted all the places of worship to be Roman, to square with the 'Christian founding legend'. In his version of *Libellus responsionum* he consciously omitted the request of Augustine

80 HE, bk. I.26.
81 HE, bk. II.5 the church of St Peter and Paul in London.
82 'The Laws of Aethelberht', para. Preface.
83 HE, bk. I.26.
84 Pickles, 'The Historiography of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion', 80–81.
85 Wood, 'Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria', 3–4.

about the relics of St Sixtus, found in some recensions of *Libellus* (e.g., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Lat. 1603 and Lat. 3846). In this text, Augustine asks Gregory to send him relics to replace the body of a British martyr 'Sixtus'.[86] Gregory doubted the authenticity of the cult and obliges by sending him relics of Pope Sixtus II. While the *Libellus* was put into question in earlier scholarship,[87] it is now seen as genuine.[88] This fragment occurs also in the context of the justification of Augustine's authority over the British bishops.[89] Inclusion would prove a continuous place of worship and a cult that was only needed to be restored because Gregory was not entirely sure how orthodox it was. It would mess things up in Bede's neat image. This is yet another of the very Roman strategies of adaptation that actually *dismantle* what modern scholars would describe as continuity. For Augustine, for Gregory, and, most importantly, for Bede this continuity was irrelevant in our understanding of the word. What *was* important was maintaining the distinction of the place of worship as a *Roman* one. And this Romanness was, in the eyes of the actors involved, much better served by relics of a Roman pope than by those of a possibly genuine Roman local martyr as it maintained distinction. Through radical adaptation a direct distinction with the religious infrastructure of the Roman Empire is lost but it is done in the name of maintaining its Roman character. This is a most striking example of how the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy can be meaningless when faced with the actual processes observable in the sources. The *translation* of Sixtus makes Britain recognisably part of the Roman world by removing an element inherited from the Roman past.

How to combine this with the St Alban story that Bede was more than happy to include, and the mention that 'to this day there stands a church' devoted to the saint?[90] Bede did not doubt the legacy of Alban, and indeed used him as an example. The most probable explanation is of course the

86 See the transcription of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Lat. 3846 hosted by the University of Toronto and produced by Michael D. Elliot at http://individual.utoronto.ca/michaelelliot/manuscripts/texts/transcriptions/paris3846libellus.pdf (accessed: 21 May 2018). See also the newest edition of the letter version produced by Valeria Mattaloni, *Rescriptum Gregorii*, 417-442. The place where the cult was located could have been Chich in Essex, see: Wood, 'Augustine and Aidan', p. 170.

87 Brechter, *Die Quellen zur Angelsachsenmission Gregors des Grossen*.

88 See especially at Meyvaert, 'Le Libellus Responsionum à Augustin de Cantorbéry: Une Oeuvre Authentique de Saint Grégoire Le Grand', 543–50; Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 20.

89 For the canon law problem of the interaction with the British bishops, see: Flechner, 'Pope Gregory and the British', 47–66.

90 HE, bk. I.8.

'restoration' by St Germanus of Auxerre from HE I.XVIII during his visit to fight the Pelagian controversy. Notwithstanding the debate about the authenticity of St Alban himself, he and his church (in both the physical, infrastructural sense and as a community) seem to have received the right credentials through the intervention of Germanus.[91] No need to worry about this shrine, says Bede – it has already been re-claimed by the scourge of the Pelagian heresy, Germanus himself, and there is no need to concern ourselves about its orthodoxy.

Additional evidence of the importance of adapatation comes from the later letters. Much has been made out of the passage from a letter of Gregory to Mellitus which advocates the re-use of pagan temples and places of worship after careful rededication.[92] It is a departure from the previous practice that Gregory had envisaged.[93] He made it absolutely clear that he concluded this to be the right way of action 'after careful consideration'. He devoted a separate passage to comment on the quality of the religious infrastructure that the mission encountered in Britain. Gregory advocated here a taking over of the infrastructural substance of the pagan religious landscape in England and making it into a governance resource for the budding mission. Remove the idols, rededicate, and re-use buildings. On saints' days, the rededicated temples were to become the foci of celebrations. The new policy was given an extensive Biblical argumentation, bringing the Book of Exodus in play. Some elements of this letter pose serious questions. Why the U-turn from the letter to Aethelberht? What prompted Gregory to allow the quite lenient practice of celebrating saints' days in a manner similar to previous pagan worship? Is he drawing on information he gained from his experience in Kent?

A dramatic turn of events was proposed by Markus, in which Gregory sent the messenger with the letter to catch up with Mellitus, who was already on his way to England.[94] It is possible that Gregory had realised that things were not going as planned. Restoring pagan temples sounds like a desperate move. In other letters, Gregory (concerned with pockets of paganism) does not flinch from the harshest measures: On one occaison, in Sardinia, he proposes crushing those who stick to pagan practices with tax until they convert.[95] There was no lack of resolve on his part.

91 Wood, 'Germanus, Alban and Auxerre', 123–29; Higham, 'Constantius, St Germanus and Fifth-Century Britain'.

92 GPRE II, bk. 11.56.

93 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 185.

94 Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a Papal Missionary Strategy', 35–36.

95 GPRE I, bk. 4.26.

There are multiple meaningful explanations here. One is a slight panic in view of the slowly progressing mission. Another is shrewdness. Gregory meant this message to be delivered to Augustine personally. It is one thing to admonish Aethelberht and his wife Bertha, to buttress their resolve by comparing them to Constantine and Helena. To acknowledge facts on the ground to a trusted messenger and the leader of the mission is another.

Gregory had shown deep understanding for using the resources of the past.[96] He did not *prescribe* using the temples as a practice, he merely allowed it. Blair rightly expressed doubt about the immediate impact of allowing such practice.[97] A less immediate timeframe could allow us to consider St Pancras, Canterbury as a place of worship affected by such practice. Another possible candidate would be St Denys in York, with a Roman altar found on the site of the church,[98] binding the practice with the mission of Paulinus, but the gaps in the history of the church are too big to prove any continuity or conscious re-use. It is difficult to find many examples. In other words, the letter might have been a tactical move, meant as a stop-gap solution in activating pagan temples as governance resources, with very limited consequecnes on the ground. It was still quite important from Bede's point of view – it gave him an explanation for the existence of Christian places of worship on the site of former pagan temples.[99] We should question his ability to distinguish fully between places with 'Anglo-Saxon' pagan tradition and Roman ones and also put under consideration the form of the 'Anglo-Saxon' temple – would they be often based on former Roman buildings or influenced by them?[100]

Bede juggles many balls in the air: He strives to praise the Roman mission even though Augustine was less successful than was expected and the effort did not bring the expected rapid results; he diminishes and essentially excludes the British contribution to the Christianisation,[101] and frames

96 In which he was, of course, not alone. For an overview of this widespread practice, see the collection: Gantner, McKitterick, and Meeder, eds., *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*.

97 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 184–86.

98 RIB 640.

99 Which in turn were probably strongly influenced by Romano-British shrines and by the 'square in square' plans of Roman stone temples: Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines and Their Prototypes', 1–28. This makes them an especially interesting case of re-use.

100 There is no known 'Anglo-Saxon' temple. Interestingly, most churches erected on Roman buildings in Britain (and they are actually quite numerous) are to be found on sites of villas, military installations and mausoleums and not temples, see: Bell, 'Churches on Roman Buildings', 2. It is of course a matter of debate how the people of the time would interpret the original functions of those remains. Our knowledge may well not have been their knowledge.

101 Meens, 'A Background to Augustine's Mission to Anglo-Saxon England', 5–17.

the Frankish contribution in such a way as not to belittle Bertha and her entourage but at the same time put the Frankish involvement decisively in the back seat, at best a short *Vorgeschichte* of the Augustinian mission. When it comes to the British Church Bede pretends not to hear.

One has to be fascinated and drawn to the materiality of this programme, materiality attained through the tangible contact with the Roman infrastructure that Bede knew and saw around him. The significant inclusions and exclusions of the stories of rededications and restorations of Roman churches and places of worship show that this is indeed a *Historia Ecclesiastica* – a Church History. In *De Templo*,[102] Bede presented the mission to the Angles, Saxons and Jutes as a continuation of the apostolic mission.[103] It can be argued that part of the reason for that was that it was also an imperial mission, a Roman one, a Christian reconquest of Britain achieved not with armies, but with books and words and gospels – and therefore, in his mind, eternal. Gregory's skilful use of imperial imagery both past and present in the letters to Aethelberht and Bertha grants us a glimpse into the political aspect of the mission – bringing into the orbit of 'successor states' the last element of the former Western Empire that remained overtly on the outside.[104]

Despite numerous (although short-lived) setbacks that the mission went through immediately after the death of Augustine, its imperial context was not easily forgotten. The symbolic geography of Kent persisted. The arrival of Theodore and Hadrian in the late 660s gave a new impulse to the strong connection with the Eastern Mediterranean.[105] Bede, writing at the beginning of the eighth century, was conscious of the imperial parallels and connections of the mission. In fact, it appealed to him as a 'clean slate' and allowed him to present the Early Medieval kings as successors of Rome on the island. When he writes that 'there are still living at this day some […] who are as well-versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in their own, in which they were born'; he ascribes this achievement to the efforts of an imperial

102 Bede, *On the Temple*, bk. II.20.7.

103 O'Reilly, 'Islands and Idols at the Ends of the Earth', 119–45.

104 In a way using a form of 'imperial fait accompli': 'There are, in fact, many hints that Gregory saw the Western German kings in a decidedly Byzantine perspective. While, in practice, quite ready to deal with them as the rulers of autonomous peoples, the modes of address employed by the papal writing office reflect the official protocol of the civil administration.' Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 28.

105 The breadth of their horizons can be for example be seen in the biblical commentaries of the cathedral school in Canterbury during their lifetime: Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*.

subject – Theodore.[106] What Bede is casting as a 'Christian foundation legend' was a calculated papal-imperial mission, prepared in the tiniest details, furnished with numerous intellectual resources, and instructed in the use of the resources already available on the island. Among those the Roman infrastructure was a key factor. The ease with which it was possible for Bede to spin this narrative, to show deep connections between the frmaeworks of Britain and the Mediterranean, shows how, even though their adaptation strategies were often different, those worlds were not completely out of sync.

3.2 Recreating Rome

Let us zoom out a bit from Canterbury and the royal pair. How did the Church in the seventh and eighth centuries use Roman remains to paint a broader picture? To what extent was it useful to buttress the claims of the Gregorian mission and later the 'Anglo-Saxon' Church, in its attempt at legitimacy in the face of the British Church? What about the dynamic between royal and ecclesiastical power? Were the Roman infrastructure and its remains also a governance resource for the Church? Had it played a role in the strategies of legitimation?

Why would Roman infrastructure be part of such a strategy in the first place? The conflict with British Christianity over the legitimacy of being the 'true' descendant of the Roman-era Church in Britain might have of course been one of the reasons. But perhaps more important was the struggle for dominance between the secular and ecclesiastical actors. Not last on this list might be the reasons that prompted Gregory to launch the mission.[107]

Vying for Rome, both past and present, was an important element of the landscape of the power-struggle of the seventh and eighth centuries. This activity could take many forms, but in the use of the past, the Church had a clear head start. Control or decisive influence (at least initially) over the written forms of government was one important element of that advantage. Another was the legitimacy brought by the present, actual connection with Rome. It is worth investigating to what extent control over infrastructure could have been another element – the placement of churches, minsters, monasteries; maintenance or pressure to maintain by other actors of selected elements like bridges or roads; acquiring space inside former Roman walled enclosures.

106 HE IV.2.

107 See the discussion in Markus, 'The Chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's Narrative and Gregory's Correspondence', 28–30; Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a Papal Missionary Strategy'.

This involvement with Roman infrastructure could take place on a number of different planes: On the purely material level; on an intermediate interface between the material and written worlds; and on the ideological plane. The nature of this involvement was mixed: Like the stone commemorating the VI Legion from the Roman fort of Binchester, re-used in the seventh century church in Escomb – indeed, it is put with the inscription facing the nave, but it is too high up to be read from the floor of the church.[108] A fitting metaphor for the many re-uses that we encounter.

'The idea of the Roman Empire was the dominant factor in Gregory's conception of geography',[109] wrote Henry Mayr-Harting. How much it was enshrined in his way of thinking is evident from the way he envisaged the ecclesiastical organisation of Britain. The two archbishoprics in London and York and 24 bishoprics seem like an exercise in symbolical geography on an enormous scale. One has to question how much both Gregory and Augustine saw such an idea as possible to enact in practice. The origin of that division as coming from an attempt to recreate the ecclesiastical map of Roman Britain has already been put forward.[110] Even though some elements of Bede's narrative describing Augustine's and Gregory's plan could have indeed derived from a (hypothetical) list of late Roman bishoprics in Gregory's possession, it is hard to ignore the highly symbolic character (two times twelve bishops – an Apostolic reference) and the possible connection with the rhetorical figure 'twenty eight cities' by Gildas. Therefore, as much as it is reasonable (although unlikely) to assume that Gregory might have had little knowledge of the situation in Britain, Augustine, by the time he arrived in Gaul (and certainly after his arrival in Britain), must have known that such a plan was unrealistic and impossible to enact in practice.[111]

The reality of the ecclesiastical organisation in Britain presents a symbolic but simultaneously practical picture. The letter laying down the ecclesiastical organisation cited by Bede is dated to 601, four years after the arrival of the mission in Britain.[112] This letter is a mixture of symbolical instruction with practical considerations – Augustine was to divide the island into two archdioceses, echoing Roman provincial structure if not fully in content than at least in form. That makes perfect sense from a practical and political

108 See Ferris and Jones, 'Transforming an Elite: Reinterpreting Late Roman Binchester', 1–11.
109 Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 60.
110 Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester Before and After the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', 226.
111 By keeping this in mind, by retaining a practical and not an idealistic lens, we can see the mission as the succes that it was in practice as opposed to its theoretical or idealistic 'failure' to enact Gregory's plan, see: Gameson, 'Augustine of Canterbury', 39.
112 HE, bk. I.29.

point of view, with Northumbria an important power centre on its own.[113] The reference to the number of cities known from Roman Britain (although which criteria were used is unknown) meant that the ecclesiastical organisation was to be based on whatever surviving Roman pattern Augustine could find. In other words, I assume that Augustine and Gregory were smarter than Bede takes them to be. By 601, they must have both known the complicated political situation and the position of the British Church (and its claim to being the 'true' successor to Roman Christianity on the island). Gregory knew that there were four provinces in Britain in the late Roman period. London, even though outside Aethelberht's kingdom, was in the royal sphere of influence. Both Augustine and Gregory probably knew the pre-eminence of London in the geography of Roman Britain, and its choice as the chief metropolis was surely influenced by this. Nevertheless, one is tempted to see that using former Roman towns might have given the newly established mission a chance to distance itself from the lay power centre of Canterbury. This attempt might have overestimated the strength of the mission. Worth noting is also something that tends to be forgotten: No division of Britain into 'English' and 'British' parts emerges from this plan. We can only make sense of the Gregory-Augustine plan if we analyse its impact on the island as seen from the Roman perspective, including both East and West. There is every indication that Augustine was supposed to preside over the Church of the whole of Britain. British bishops were to be part of his episcopate. This plan did not work, but the attempt to enact it shows how the Roman perspective dominated the mission's goals.

That Britain was still being considered a part of the Roman world by Gregory is evident from the way he conducted his correspondence pertaining to the island. The aforementioned letter, dated by the reign of Maurice, is also an imperial exercise and an illustration of the imperial idea behind the mission. It reads like a writ of an emperor reorganising the province, maintaining connections with the Roman past. The letter is a powerful activating document. When Gregory wrote to Aethelberht and when he dealt with organisational matters of the Church with Augustine, he tended to evoke the emperor in order to strengthen the universal and imperial character of the mission.[114] One example of this is the dating of his letters by imperial regnal years. He did not do it that often; sometimes in his correspondence when he sent people as his emissaries,[115] or when discussing

113 Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 109.
114 GPRE II, bk. XI.37.
115 GPRE I, bk. I.38a.

legal matters.[116] In other words – could it be that the method that Gregory used to date his letters mattered, and in case of the letters sent to England helped to present the mission as having imperial credentials? Bede seemed to be sold to this idea – he meticulously copied the dating formula. As Jean Chélini has noted, Gregory was a subject of the *basileus*, a subject of an inheritor of imperial power of Rome.[117] This has to have played a role in the way he envisaged his mission to Britain.[118]

Gregory, himself an *apocrisiarius* of Pope Pelagius II in Constantinople from 579 to 585, must have been at least informed about sentiments about Britain in the imperial capital. He himself kept a score of *apocrisiarii* in Constantinople.[119] The Augustinian mission was an imperial enterprise as well – its programme makes little sense if this aspect is omitted or marginalised.[120] Bede's narrative of Augustine's arrival, although accepted as broadly trustworthy, has been proven to be lacking in credible details.[121] Nevertheless, it is telling that Augustine first preaches and works in the church of St Martin, outside the city walls: '[B]uilt whilst the Romans were still in the island, wherein the queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian, used to pray.'[122] St Martin's seems to have originally been a mausoleum, possibly hastily furnished into a church by Liudhard, Chaplain and Bishop of Bertha; thus, it was not a Romano-British church. It was a first stop for Augustine, but it belonged to a different geography, and he focused his attention on establishing his own. Now let us focus on how the Augustinian mission got inside the walls.

116 GPRE II, vol. I, bk. XI.15; of course, the survival of the datings that we have is influenced by the editions and redactions of the letters corpus.

117 Chélini, 'La mission d'Augustin de Cantorbéry dans la vision missionnaire de saint Grégoire le Grand', 41–42.

118 It seems difficult to ignore the testament of Maurice that he drafted during his illness in 597, in which he bequeathed Rome as a capital for his son Tiberius, who was to rule over Italy and the Tyrrhenian islands; his eldest son Theodosius was to be an emperor of Constantinople and rule over the east while his other sons were to rule 'the remaining portions of the Roman state': Ostrogorsky, 'The Byzantine Empire in the World of the Seventh Century', 9. Universal, imperial ambitions were much on the radar of Maurice and it seems improbable that Gregory was not aware of them.

119 Western, 'The Papal Apocrisiarii in Constantinople during the Pontificate of Gregory, 590–604', 697–714.

120 It is surprising that the collection of his *Letters* does not include any direct mentions of imperial involvement in the Conversion enterprise – it is highly unlikely that there was no correspondence on the matter – which raises the question of redaction of those letters and with what structure and agenda in mind they were put together in their final form.

121 Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English'.

122 HE, bk. I.26.

The king converted finally (although it is unclear when exactly), but still did not grant the missionaries the right to build a church inside the walls and settle there. That happened later, after the king was 'instructed' in the ways of salvation: 'Nec distulit, quin etiam ipsis doctoribus suis locum sedis eorum gradui congruum in Doruuerni metropoli sua donaret, simul et necessarias in diuersis speciebus possessiones conferret.'[123] Christ Church was built in the north-western corner of the former Roman city, at a place that did not present much (practical) value to the king for the foundations have been found to cut through the layer of dark earth and across the Roman road (which therefore must have not been visible at the time – in other words this was in all probability an empty stretch of land inside the walled enclosure). But it was still built, at least partially, from re-used Roman masonry.[124] Contrary to Bede's narrative,[125] no traces of a Roman church have been found during the excavations.[126] Perhaps Bede was simply mistaken, or perhaps another church was found and consecrated within the city walls – there is evidence that St Peter, Canterbury had a Roman foundation as it is aligned to the Roman and not the Medieval street pattern.[127] The aisled building close to the cathedral itself could be Romano-British, and been *identified* by Augustine as a church and then 'restored'.[128] A bit of sidestepping of the practical difficulties and 'minor' details by Augustine cannot be excluded. Apparently he could play tricks with the masonry quite well.

The cathedral was built anew, using Roman bricks and stones, and inside the walls of the Roman city. A complex ideological program was realised – a connection to the past was maintained and a symbolical geography of Rome recreated in Canterbury. One of the factors in building the cathedral anew might have also been ideological and, paradoxically, used to strengthen the connection with the Roman past. We know there was a remaining British Christian community in Kent, and maybe even in Canterbury itself. Perhaps Augustine strove to assert his Roman credentials by getting the royal assent to build a new church representing 'true' Roman authority? His contacts with the British bishops were probably far more extensive than is assumed.[129] The

123 HE I.26: 'Nor was it long before he gave his preachers a settled residence in his metropolis of Canterbury, with such possessions of different kinds as were necessary for their subsistence.'

124 Blockley, Sparks, and Tatton-Brown, *Canterbury Cathedral Nave*.

125 HE, I.33.

126 Blockley, Sparks, and Tatton-Brown, *Canterbury Cathedral Nave*, 99.

127 Frere, 'Verulamium and Canterbury: Continuity and Discontinuity', 194.

128 Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 50.

129 Wood, 'Augustine and Aidan: Bureaucrat and Charismatic?', 170.

'victory' (both over paganism and the British Church) might not have been a foregone conclusion, and it might have involved a complicated ideological struggle in which the control of Roman spaces was a crucial factor. It is a very tangible example of the plurality of Romannesses at play in Britain at the end of the sixth century. There was no codified version of what it meant to be the successor of Rome, because it was very much still a living organism, undergoing adaptations in real time.

Far from not understanding the history of the British Church and its claim to a connection with early Christianity Augustine knew perfectly well, or at least recognised quickly, where the claims of the British Church lay.[130] Determined to gain the upper hand, he entered into an ideological partnership with the ruler of Kent that also involved the claim to Roman infrastructure. This kind of partnership, based on the renewed focus on Late Antique models, gained currency in the seventh century under the influence of the mission.[131] Modelling Canterbury on Continental examples has been suggested, but it tells just a part of the story – this was an undertaking on an even larger scale.[132] The result of that activity was a symbolic recreation of Rome not only in Canterbury itself but also in Kent. This recreation formed a map of relationships between places, buildings, and dedications. It can be understood as mapping through 'moving from one place to the next'[133] – in other words, the relationship and the sequence are more important than the actual geographical distance; it is 'a landscape of the mind'.

One can trace this landscape of the mind in the actual landscape with a little bit of help from the Roman roads. This recreation of Rome exists on an axis that coincides with the section of Watling Street from London to Canterbury and further down to the coast. At its core lies the Christ Church cathedral, Holy Saviour, an intramural church, restoring the memory of Rome inside the former *Duroventium*, using Roman material but explicitly *not* on the site of a Romano-British church. On one pole, in Rochester, there is St Andrew, dedicated to the same saint as the monastery in Rome from which both Augustine and Gregory hailed (also housing a monastic school, just like its Roman counterpart). On the other, there is the dual monastery of SS Peter and Paul, extramural like both the basilica of Peter and the basilica of Paul in Rome, a place connected with the memory of

130 As has been claimed by some, most notably: Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 71.

131 Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity*, 108.

132 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 66–67.

133 Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, 7.

the martyrs, envisaged as the burial ground of the ruling class of Kent and as a monastic base for the mission.[134]

The two early St Pancras churches in London and Canterbury respectively pose a bigger problem. It is tempting to bind them together with the Augustinian mission, or at least with the conversion period in general. As extramural churches hailing from the seventh century, they certainly fit the pattern in terms of re-creating Rome: Gregory the Great was known to have reformed the cult of St Pancras; he transferred the St Pancras church in Rome to monastic hands, and the cult of St Pancras was considered to be extramural in nature.[135]

St Pancras, Canterbury, has been put forward as a Roman church rededicated by Augustine on the basis of back-dating Phase I of the church to Roman times.[136] This is based on the results of Frank Jenkins' excavations at the site, conducted in the years 1973-74. They were never published (apart from a short excavation note) and survive solely in the Canterbury Museum archive in form of his notes.[137] In fact, he states that the Phase I building was constructed from re-used Roman bricks and that there is just one coin of Constantine I found near the porch. The notes, reconstructed by Kevin Blockley, state that it was not a late Roman building, but a building post-dating the Romano-British phase, constructed from re-used Roman bricks in two phases.[138] Therefore, this might have been a place of pagan importance to the kings of Kent, based on the ruins of a Roman structure of sorts, 'rededicated' through the relics of St Pancras, but it was *not* a late Roman church. It is a part of the ideological programme of the Conversion period architecture.

The case of St Pancras, London, is more complicated. The antiquarian tradition of the church being of Roman date finds no support in the known archaeology. We have just one surviving note stating that during the renovations in 1847 an altar with the date 625 was found underneath the floor of the church.[139] This would definitely fit into the symbolical geography, but

134 Eric Cambridge has noted how much the reconstructions of the buildings themselves relied too heavily on the parallels with the now no longer existing church of Reculver. Therefore, the more important it is to focus on their placement, which we can put into context in much greater detail than their actual visual appearance. Cambridge, 'The Architecture of the Augustinian Mission', 202–36.

135 Thacker, 'The Origin and Early Development of Rome's Intramural Cults', 16, 23.

136 Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, 172–74.

137 Webster and Cherry, 'Medieval Britain in 1975'.

138 Blockley, 'The Anglo-Saxon Churches of Canterbury', 61–63.

139 Emery and Miller, 'Archaeological Findings at the Site of the St Pancras Burial Ground and Its Vicinity'.

we lack any firm documentary or archaeological evidence: Tradition is not enough. An altar with a date sounds highly unlikely and improbable – it all smells of fabrication or misunderstanding at best.

The church of Stone-by-Faversham also remains an ambiguous case. The re-use phase of the church is later, but it might be part of the geography of conversion on the basis of possible religious activity dating from the beginning of the seventh century *outside* of the Roman structure.[140] Recent excavations have found numerous other Roman structures in the vicinity, and indications that the area was in use throughout the period 450-650 (pointing towards a small gap in occupation).[141] The discovery, nearby, of a large amphitheatre, and the confirmation of the existence of a Romano-British cult site in Blacklands in 2008 point towards the conclusion that this was a much more significant region than previously assumed.[142] The Marian dedication is late, not attested in any early documents. Therefore, Faversham must remain a question mark on this symbolic map but remains an example of practical re-use.[143]

Now, this is a map of Rome written with words and not images, or rather with churches and dedications, and with the physical substance – Roman masonry.[144] That particular political considerations of the time were considered, like the choice of Canterbury over London or Rochester, is probably more due to its regional importance at the time than because it was a former Roman city.[145] This 'map' is a perfect example of the new *territorium* of the former Roman urban space of Canterbury and, by extension, Rome. As Bryan Ward-Perkins remarked in the case of Constantinople, cities can have an 'ideological' territory that can stretch way beyond their topographical delineation.[146]

But there are in fact not one but two symbolical geographies in south-east England that make use of the reference to Roman urban spaces, and one predates the Augustinian mission and has its own set of characteristics – in a way it embodies a different, abandoned attempt at using the legitimacy of

140 Fletcher and Meates, 'The Ruined Church of Stone-by-Faversham: Second Report', 69.

141 Wilkinson, *The Interim Results of an Archaeological Investigation at Stone Chapel Field, Syndale, Faversham, Kent*.

142 For the results of the excavations, see Wilkinson, *The Roman Religious Sanctuary at "Blacklands", School Farm, Graveney Road, Faversham, Kent*.

143 For a summary of the archaeological evidence, see: Taylor and Yonge, 'The Ruined Church at Stone-by-Faversham: A Re-Assessment', 118–45.

144 Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, 4.

145 Brooks, 'From British to English Christianity', 24–27.

146 Ward-Perkins, 'Constantinople: A City and Its Ideological Territory', 325–45.

Rome. The foundations of St Martin churches – both in Canterbury and in London (St Martin in the Fields) can be tentatively associated with Bertha and belong to a different, earlier, strata of symbolic geography, associated strongly with the Merovingian influence. Those two geographies have been conflated in the past, making it difficult to reconcile Augustine's activity on *de novo* sites and Bertha's direct use of old Roman places.[147]

This stratum of the symbolical geography is also gendered. Bertha's mother was strongly connected with the convent of St Martin in Tours, giving a substantial bequest there.[148] Additionally, archaeological excavations from the years 1993-1994 in St Martin-des-Champs in Paris have confirmed (through the discovery of two late sixth and early seventh century sarcophagi) that it was a funerary basilica already in the sixth century, predating its first charter mention from 709.[149] This might indeed be the St Martin 'outside the gate' mentioned by Gregory of Tours in his description of the fire of Paris.[150] In light of the recent discovery of an empty grave in St Martin in the Fields, London, belonging probably to a high-status female, dating from the early seventh century, this strengthens Bertha's connection with the 'Martian geography'. The grave was furnished in line with Merovingian furnishings, and is aligned precisely east-west, which, even though it does not have to be an indication of a Christian burial, could be taken as an argument for it.[151] We do not know from when the monikers 'in the fields' and 'des Champs' come – they might be a coincidence or unrelated developments spurring from the extramural location.

St Martin in the Fields stands on an extramural mausoleum site (the excavations have discovered a sarcophagus from the beginning of the fifth century), and St Martin in Canterbury was built on a Roman building, possibly also originally a mausoleum.[152] It is also a productive site, with a kiln fired for the first time in the first half of the fifth century and later mud-brick ovens dating to the second half of the sixth.[153] Bertha's symbolic geography is much more prone to re-use Roman cult buildings directly. There are some indications that it was St Martin in the Fields that constituted the first church in the London area and not, as has been assumed, St Paul's.[154]

147 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 61.
148 GPRE I, bk. IX.26; Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, 513.
149 Brut, *Musée Des Arts et Métiers, Ancien Prieuré de Saint-Martin-Des-Champs*, 60.
150 *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis. Libri Historiarum X*, vol. 1, bk. VIII.33.
151 Telfer, 'St Martin-in-the-Fields Church', 26.
152 Jenkins, 'St. Martin's Church at Canterbury', 11–15.
153 Telfer, 'New Evidence for the Transition'.
154 Blackmore, *London in the Not-so-Dark Ages*.

St Paul's might have been built at a later date, possibly under the influence of Theodore. The charter that documents the original land grant was forged, and Bede's narrative from HE II.3 might be a retrospective casting of Aethelberht as the main restorer and builder of churches.[155]

Those two geographies met in the side chapel of SS Peter and Paul in Canterbury dedicated to St Martin, where Bertha was buried.[156] It is striking that in the area of Canterbury, not a single church connected with Augustine's mission was actually rebuilt on a Roman building (as opposed to Bertha's programme earlier). At the same time all those foundations are placed in areas with Roman past, especially in relation to existing Roman enclosures and roads. This deliberate clean break must have been driven ideologically as an assertion of the Roman mission's authority and a complicated attempt at a *de novo* refunding of Roman Christianity in Britain. We observe here two adaptation strategies. The exactness in which those two geographies (even if we consider the work and interventions of our mental cartographer – Bede) evoke Rome and Gaul respectively is astonishing. The dedications and functions are preserved and all of this happened in a relatively short span of time.

There remains the question of the target group for this programme. I believe that existing British ecclesiastics and the Christian populace (however small in number) constituted an important part of this programme's audience. It was clever, ingenious, and achieved the desired effect of presenting the mission as the real heirs of Roman Christianity while at the same time distancing it from buildings that might have had associations (however distant) with British Christianity. It also recognised the political circumstances of the day, and incorporated and appropriated rather smoothly the earlier, more Merovingian in nature, programme of Bertha. Roman urban spaces were crucial for this programme: The foundations revolved around them and made full use of their symbolical capital. This should be seen as a process distinct from the slightly later re-use of Roman structures for parish churches, as evidenced by the –stan place-names.[157]

The second important audience of that programme was of course the ruling class of Kent. It seems that Aethelberht stepped up to the challenge, and that he realised the importance of the space at his disposal through the ideological programme of Augustine. Peter Brown has written that

155 Hart, *The Early Charters of Essex*, 8.
156 Werner, 'The Liudhard Medalet', 33.
157 Bell, 'Churches on Roman Buildings', 6.

Constantine decided for a diety that 'owed nothing to the past'.[158] Aethelberht, the wannabe Constantine almost three hundred years later, was choosing a god that gave an unprecedented access to the past. The later kings took this opportunity to use the Roman urban space as a powerful tool and, in fact, a governance resource, which allowed them to partake in similar shaping of the same political and ecclesiastical landscape as their Merovingian counterparts. Canterbury was to have a revival as a power centre similar to what we see in Metz – by becoming a capital, and thanks to the arrangements of the early Conversion period, new life was injected into the former Roman urban space.[159] It seems that this 'recreation' project did have practical consequences on the ground – for example the new marketplace of Canterbury in 762 was situated between the cathedral and the monastery, showing that the new spatial alignment could draw practical focus.[160] Bede's narrative of Britain's relationship with Rome (and his narrative of the Conversion itself) stresses the successor status, and there are grounds to believe that such attitudes might have been strengthened by the use of symbolical geography. The target group here was interregional – the narrative looks over the sea towards Gaul and Rome. But it would, I posit, be a readable event to someone from as far away as Constantinople.

The grants of walled spaces stand at the very centre of this geography and they seem to favour monastic foundations. Those grants occurred not only in former Roman forts but also in cities, as we have seen in Canterbury and Rochester. Additionally, we can see other examples of such practice. Although we have no written proof of the grant, the same practice was repeated in Caistor-by-Norwich or the former *Venta Icenorum*. The parish church built in the south-western corner might be of an early date, and it fits into the grid plan of the city.[161] A similar programme was at play almost a century later in the kingdom of the Hwicce – also a place where surviving British Christianity was a major factor. The kingdom of the Hwicce was probably Christian before it received its first bishop, and Christianity was well established there.[162] The locations of the Worcester and Gloucester minsters (both founded inside Roman walled urban space) seem to confirm that. Additionally, the Gloucester minster is founded on royal land – which means that the ownership pattern of the former Roman space is also

158 Brown, Through the Eye of a Needle, 33.

159 Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas', 247–48.

160 Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 26.

161 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 66–67; Bowden and Bescoby, 'The Plan of Venta Icenorum (Caistor-by-Norwich)', 324–34.

162 Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester Before and After the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', 231.

similarily structured.[163] In the case of corner monastic foundations there might be a connection with the earlier, Romano-British and post-Roman tradition of placing churches in the corners of the *fora*, which also offered a natural enclosure, like in Exeter. A good example of such a foundation placement being continued in the Early Medieval period would be St Paul in the Bail in Lincoln.[164]

We have not only Continental but also imperial parallels for such actions – we can compare it to Justinian's donations in Pannonia from the first half of the sixth century inside Roman urban spaces that might have been largely impoverished if not deserted.[165] The predisposition of the Roman mission to seek walled enclosures for their monasteries, and therefore the source of their pressure on the royal authorities to be granted such, might have its origins in Gregory the Great's policy. In letter 50 of Book I, he instructs Symmachus the Defensor to sail around Corsica to find a place well sheltered and walled, which would not require much work to restore.[166] The coastal forts of Roman Britain would fit such a description, and indeed the majority of them became home to monastic foundations.[167] The mission and its direct descendants followed imperial practices, with the interesting take over by local kings of the role of the emperor as the dispositor of the walled space, and it followed practices that Gregory had worked out in imperial context. A late cover act of the Empire in action.

John Blair proposed that minsters should be sought on the sites of Roman villas.[168] We can safely add to that, at least in some regions in the South, Roman walled urban and non-urban enclosures. This shows how valuable Roman infrastructural remains could be in running an Early Medieval polity in Britain. Their re-use as assets was a beneficial if not crucial part of the creation of kingship as an institution. Two currents are combined here – the Augustinian mission's desire to create a Roman landscape, and the early kings using the opportunity to assert their rights of being successors to Rome by working hand in hand with the Roman mission. Around this point, they also reasserted the right to dispose at will with most of the Roman walled enclosures.

163 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 90. There is clear royal involvement in Gloucester, see Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, 144.

164 Gilmour, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church at St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln'.

165 Christie, 'Towns, Lands and Power', 294.

166 *GPRE* I, n. I.50.

167 There are in total 46 churches associated with Roman forts in Britain, see: Bell, 'Churches on Roman buildings', 88.

168 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 8.

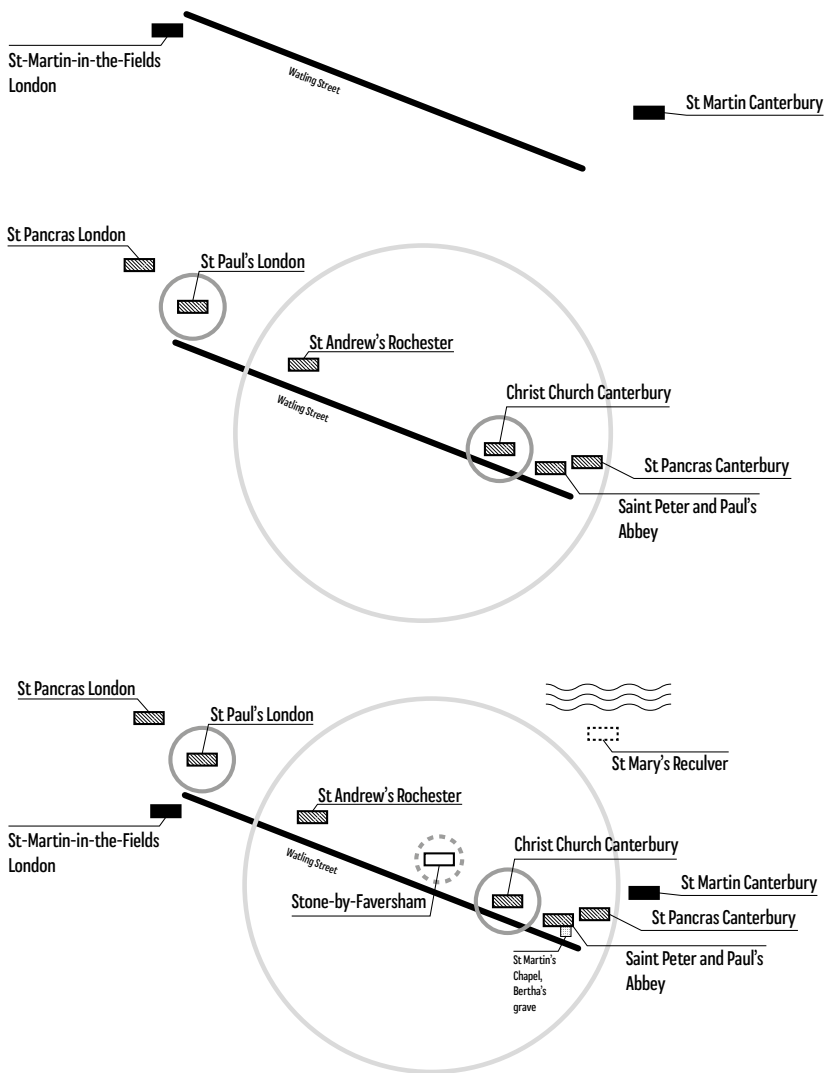

Fig. 1-3. The phases of the creation of the symbolical landscape in Kent

3.3 Reoccupying Urban Spaces as Ecclesiastical Capitals

Roman enclosures seem to have been widely used in Britain for ecclesiastical purposes.[169] But the choice of ecclesiastical capitals in the period of the

169 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 53.

Augustinian mission was, as we can see from the sources, an attempt at applying the Roman idea onto the political realities on the ground. The power landscape underwent a significant shift in many areas between the ending of Roman Britain and the time of the Gregorian mission. Already the limited, pre-Theodore (pre-668), network of sees made use of former Roman urban space: Canterbury (597), Rochester (604), London (604) were based in former cities. York (626) was of course based in a major former Roman city. Dommoc (631) was probably the Roman fort at Walton Castle, so not a former city but still a place of the Roman past.[170] Dorchester-on-Thames (634) was actually placed in one of the towns where a certain degree of *actual* settlement continuity has been proposed and was moved to Winchester (660), a former Roman city.[171] Lindisfarne is an exception, but might have stood close to a Roman coastal station.[172]

The post-Theodore geography continued this trend, but some of the sees were placed inside multi-focal arrangements surrounding former Roman urban spaces, fitting into local political and economic provisions. The correlation of the ecclesiastical foundations with the Roman geography in this period has been noted previously, but new archaeological discoveries have allowed us to complete the picture of this adaptation strategy.[173] Of the sees founded before the end of the seventh century, some cases are obvious: Worcester (680) and Leicester (681). The multi-focal arrangements with symbolic reference to former Roman sites or places where the focal point has moved involve: Hexham (685), linked with Corbridge; Hereford (676), linked with Kenchester; Lichfield (669), linked with Letocetum. Lindsey (678) was probably a special case, because of a long-standing Romano-British presence in the region, but it could have been located in Lincoln.[174] Selsey (681) lies in the direct vicinity of Chichester (where it was moved in 1072), even Elmham (672), long assumed to be at an odd place in this system, devoid of a Roman past, was probably just a shifted *focus* of the Roman small town of Billingford, continuously occupied until around 750 AD (which would, interestingly, make it a fascinating example of direct continuity of settlement that received its own see – a maintenance of distinction bearing fruits).[175] In other words, the map of ecclesiastical foundations up to the end

170 Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, 36.

171 Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 223.

172 Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, 301–2.

173 Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester Before and After the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', 229–30.

174 Green, 'The British Kingdom of Lindsey'.

175 Wallis, *Romano-British and Saxon Occupation at Billingford, Central Norfolk*.

of the seventh century in Britain is much less mysterious than it seems. It respects the new political arrangements but does so by sticking to former Roman spaces, where possible.

Nobody tried to recreate the ecclesiastical organisation of Roman Britain. I doubt that such organisation was known in its exact specifics to Augustine or Gregory prior to sending the mission; as has already been stated, they might have had only a vague idea about the list of bishoprics and even that is a hypothetical.[176] By the times of Theodore, elements of that knowledge were perhaps recovered through contacts with the British bishops. There are indications that a lot of the sees located in Roman cities like Exeter, Gloucester, Worcester, and Carlisle, as well as Letocetum and Wroxeter were indeed British ecclesiastical seats that were taken over.[177] The political landscape had changed considerably, and in most cases it made no sense to return to a see even if it was known to have existed in Roman times. Essentially, the sees founded in former Roman towns and cities or in their vicinity were positioned there not because there used to be a bishopric in ancient times, but because those spaces were Roman. Apart from maybe Lincoln, all the cathedrals were actually new buildings, not refurbished Roman churches. There is a logic to this practice, which is evident in the analysis of symbolical geography of Canterbury and Kent which we conducted above.

In the analysis of control over Roman spaces charters are an indispensable resource. They document the interest of the Church in obtaining places connected with the Roman past. The question is: To what extent was this a conscious choice? Reading the complicated ideological programme of Bede (ranging from the Easter controversy to the political position of his native Northumbria) we can see that the Roman inheritance is of paramount importance.[178] Already in HE.I.11 he compiles a short list of infrastructural elements left by the Romans, that were seen 'to his day': '[Q]uod ciuitates, farus, pontes, et stratae ibidem factae usque hodie testantur.'[179] Little in

176 It is difficult to say how much was known about the provincial organisation of Britain in Rome, but it seems that it was at least to an extent preserved in memory in Northern Gaul, as evidenced by the Laterculus of Polemius Silvius, copied *c.* 448 and mentioning the British provinces, although placed at the end of the list, see: Wesch-Klein, 'Der Laterculus des Polemius Silvius', 57–60; Chastagnol, 'Notes chronologiques sur l'Histoire Auguste et le "Laterculus" de Polemius Silvius', 173–88; Jill Harries, 'Church and State in the Notitia Galliarum', 26.

177 Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 120 and Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 32.

178 On Bede's ideologies, see: Goffart, 'The Historia Ecclesiastica: Bede's Agenda and Ours', 29–45.

179 HE I.11.

Bede is what it seems to be on first glance, and this 'Roman checklist' is no exception – it sets the stage for the support of a claim to Roman inheritance that he pursues. We should probably not doubt that the 'cities, towers, bridges and [paved] streets' were indeed visible in Bede's time, nor their usability as a potential prop for the Church as governance and legitimacy resources. The state they were in is another matter.

Let us move west now and look at the kingdom of the Hwicce, which offers an example of how the Church came into possession of Roman infrastructure through early charters, and how, at the interface of ecclesiastical and secular power, infrastructure became a major symbolic governance resource. It is debated to what extent it was formed by conquest (it could have been the result of a merger between post-Roman polities of mixed origin).[180] It lay in a highly Romanized landscape, rich in villas, that seems to have upheld a relatively stable post-Roman polity. The Tribal Hidage mentions it having 7000 hides.[181] While the Hwicce territory has a number of peculiarities in its adaptation strategies, we encounter here many of the ingriedients that we have see in Kent as well: The strong female involvement, the monastic flavour, and charters as key instruments of reforging distinction into adaptation. Bertha's (Bertana) monastery in Bath was founded in 675 by a charter grant of Osric, King of the Hwicce (S51).[182] Doubts about the authenticity of the document persist, but the general consensus seems to follow a line of at least a genuine basis showing Aldhelm's influence[183] for accepting it as broadly trustworthy.[184] The charter provides for a large (100 hides) grant for a nunnery that is supposed to provide for an establishment of a monastery. It is silent about the location of the monastery but makes it clear that the land is 'adjacent to the walls of the city called Bath'. What is even more interesting is the precise wording of the preamble, laying down the ideological framework of the foundation.[185]

The narration of the charter itself is a story of adaptation and distinction. First Osric, King of the Hwicce, summarises the history of the conversion of his kingdom: The idols were razed to the ground; baptism was received, and evangelic and apostolic dogmas were explained to the Hwicce. Sometime

180 Bassett, 'How the West Was Won', 107–18; Coates, 'The Name of the Hwicce'; Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 8.

181 Brownbill, *The Tribal Hidage*, 625–48.

182 *Charters of Bath and Wells*, no. 1; Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 172–74; Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and Two Charters Dated AD 676 and 680', 165–74.

183 Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and Two Charters Dated AD 676 and 680'.

184 Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England*, 25.

185 Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 172.

in between those events, the idols were finally eradicated. Then a synod prompted the establishment of a diocese, in adherence with its decisions, and in order to forward the case of 'Catholic and orthodox' faith.[186] After this business was completed, royal attention could be directed towards the founding of monasteries – both for men and women. Those monasteries were to provide space for people previously exposed to the deception of sin. There is a curious change from 'we' to 'I'.[187] Who are the 'we'? Did the author of the *proemium* recognise this to be a conversion history? It would make perfect sense, with Osric being placed as the executor of the final stage of aligning the Hwicce with Roman Christianity. This highly stylised narrative shows how charters could be versatile literary instruments, extending their usability way above that of simple administrative tools.

The progression of Christianisation seems to uphold the thesis that the Hwicce were first exposed to Christianity through the British Church.[188] The attention given to the 'Catholic and orthodox' case and the proper 'evangelic and apostolic dogmas', in addition to the act of baptism, prompts a cautious but nevertheless justified interpretation in which a radical turn towards Roman Christianity has been performed. It was achieved through foundations – the minster at Bath re-used Roman remains, and the nunnery received land 'adjacent to the walls'.[189] What we observe here is both a practical re-use of what was a highly Romanized and well-managed landscape that was subject to substantial re-organisation as a result of grants in the Early Medieval period, and the symbolic re-use of Bath as a Roman place.[190] The charter styles it *civitas* and puts the foundation of the monastery as a final act in a history of conversion, with its ups and downs, ending in the full embracing of Roman Christianity, embodied by an investment of Roman space into monasticism. This is 'use of the Past' if there ever was one. It also places the foundation of the monastery as a pinnacle in process of adaptation. Simultaneously it also makes it into an important marker showing the Hwicce territory as a still recongisable part of the Roman world.

186 In all probability the Council of Hertford from 672 under the leadership of Theodore, which reorganised the structure of the Church in England, introduced more bishoprics and followed a structure similar to ecumenical councils, with Theodore presiding, unanimous agreement by acclamation and ratification of proceedings, see: HE IV.5

187 Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 172.

188 Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, 253–71; Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 10.

189 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 272, 274–75.

190 Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 3.

In contemporary terms, it is significant that among the witnesses of this charter we find both Theodore and Wilfrid.[191] Wilfrid's strong position against non-Roman Christianity and his involvement in the Easter controversy made him a perfect candidate to attest this charter. His involvement against the Irish cause,[192] as well as his involvement in diplomatic relations with Gaul (e.g., during the negotiations about the return of Dagobert)[193] made him into the perfect 'Gallic Connection' for this charter and its ideological programme of reasserting the primate of the Roman Church, re-using the Roman past and re-activating the governance resource of Bath. In fact, his interest in the Roman legacy was three-folded: Inspired by the Roman remains in Britain, by what he saw in Rome but also, perhaps crucially, by what he experienced in Gaul.[194]

There seems to be a good degree of royal participation in the interest in the Roman legacy. King Osric's involvement in this kind of re-use of the past finds perhaps its fullest embodiment in a charter dated to 679 (S70). The charter, although not entirely genuine, has been seen mostly as based on earlier materials.[195] In it, Aethelred, King of Mercia, bestows to Osric and his brother Oswald two grants of land, 300 hides each, the one for Osric in Gloucester (former Roman *Glevum*). The land given to Osric is to be used to found a monastery. Aethelred seems to have exerted overlordship over the Hwicce at the time and again, the language used is crucial.[196] The Roman infrastructure, in this case the ownership of the urban space, is used here as part of the grammar of power; it underlines the power dynamic between Osric, Oswald and Aethelred. The place name Gleaweceasore preserves in Old English the memory of *Glevum* and the place is called *civitas* throughout the charter. In this case, the grant is not only given to sustain the foundation financially, but also to provide space for the church and the monastery. We are not sure where exactly the early minster was located, but it seems reasonable to presume that it lay in the vicinity of the current cathedral.[197] This would make it one of the corner foundations, receiving grants inside former Roman city enclosures.

191 Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and Two Charters Dated AD 676 and 680'.

192 Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 12.

193 Fouracre, 'Wilfrid on the Continent', 199–213; Wood, 'The Continental Connections of Anglo-Saxon Courts from Aethelberht to Offa', 443–78; Kirby, *The Making of Early England*, 265.

194 Cambridge, 'The Sources and Function of Wilfrid's Architecture at Ripon and Hexham', 151.

195 John, *Land Tenure in Early England*, 46, 76; Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 153–60; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, 94–96.

196 Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 158.

197 Heighway, 'Anglo–Saxon Gloucester to A.D. 1000'.

The minster was dedicated, as was the one in Bath, to St Peter (although the earliest attestation of that dedication we have comes from spurious charter S74, purportedly dated to 682), strengthening the Roman connection.[198] Osric was to be buried in the abbey, perhaps in an attempt to build a dynastic connection with the abbey but also with the Roman past of *Glevum* and the Roman present of the Church.[199] There is little doubt that Mercian overlordship in one way or another has influenced this activation of Roman city-enclosures as governance resources and passing them on to the Church. Also, it is hard to ignore the possible influence of Wilfrid, whose connection with the Mercian court we can attest through *Vita Wilfridi*.[200] The gift of those 300 hides was therefore not only a gift of land but also a gift of the Roman past.

There is an interesting coda to this story: The church of All Saints' in Brixworth, a fascinating example at how skilful Mercia was in operating the Roman past. It was long thought to have been built *c.* 675 but the investigation of the building's fabric points towards a much later date, probably at the very end of the eighth century.[201] There could have been an earlier, possibly wooden foundation there, but it is uncertain. Some have even equated Brixworth with Clofesho, the still unidentified meeting-place of synods.[202] This is a very tempting possibility and exploring it further might shine some light not only at the reasons for building a stone and brick church at Brixworth but also at the exploitation of symbolic resources in Mercia and at the sequence of re-using *Romanitas*.

The church of All Saints' can be the final step in two very important processes: The Mercian hegemony and the active use of Roman remains on a massive scale to buttress claims of authority. After the revision of the date when the church was built it was often attributed to Offa. The building itself is very large for the period and uses extensively Roman remains that were, as we know on the basis of a petrological study, transported over 40 kilometers from Leicester even though there were nearby Roman sites.[203] There are visual similarities between the Brixworth church and the still standing Jewry Wall in Leicester.[204] It is an exercise in evoking Roman memory on a great scale,

198 Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 241-242.
199 Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, 37; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 229.
200 Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, chap. 56.
201 Parsons and Sutherland, *The Anglo-Saxon Church of All Saints, Brixworth*.
202 Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho*; Davis, 'Brixworth and Clofesho', 71.
203 Sutherland, Parsons, 'The Petrological Contribution to the Survey of All Saints' Church'.
204 Sutherland, 'Burnt Stone in a Saxon Church and its Implications'.

both in its materials and in its style. There seems to be one particular period when such a foundation would make perfect sense: The very beginning of the reign of Offa's successor Coenwulf (whose reign came after a very brief reign of Offa's son Ecgfrith). Coenwulf's retreat from the metropolitan see in Lichfield on the basis of a 'correct' interpretation of Gregory the Great's intention and intensive cooperation with Leo III in that matter necessitated a demonstration of both *Romanitas* and authority. Brixworth All Saints' displayed both of these. The translation of the building material from Leicester and visual citations from the still standing buildings in the Roman city underlined that display. If then Clofesho was indeed Brixworth (which would mean that there had to be a wooden church on the site before) the All Saints' was built between the synods of 798 and 803. This is consistent with the analysis of the structure itself and does make sense in the context of the ecclesiastical politics of Coenwulf. Moreover, such Roman-connected foundation does square with the trend to connect assembly places in general and synod meeting places in particular with the Roman past.

This means that Brixworth is not as much an example of the early Carolingian spirit arriving in Britain but more a pinnacle of symbolic re-use of the existing Roman resources, in spirit of Gregory, Augustine, and Wilfrid. It constitutes a new beginning, but is, simultaneously, also a sort of an end.

4. Memory and Infrastructure

4.1 Whithorn and Remembering Rome

There is one site and one case that happens to defy most of the tenets connected with the traditional narrative of the infrastructural decline of the Late Antique period in Britain, the relative inactivity of the British Church outside of its sphere of influence, and the rapid loss of technological skills in the fifth century: Whithorn. Situated near the coast of Galloway, in south-western Scotland, and at a significant distance from Hadrian's Wall, it continues to perplex historians and archaeologists alike.

Making sense of Whithorn, and specifically of its beginnings and its supposed founder St Ninian, is difficult. The textual corpus directly connected with the early history of the site is very limited. The so-called *Latinus* stone, two mentions of Whithorn in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE III.4 and HE V.23), an anonymous poem, *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*,[205] from the end

205 *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*, 943–61.

of the eighth century, and a prose life, *Vita Niniani*, possibly penned by Aelred of Rieveaulx in the twelfth century.[206] None of these texts presents a straightforward picture,[207] and the very existence of St Ninian has been put into question.[208] Ian Wood suggested, in a spirit of meaningful explanations, two possible trajectories of St Ninian's life: A fifth and a sixth century one, differing on his position towards Rome and his role in the Christianisation of the Picts.[209]

For Bede, Whithorn is only important in the context of the Northumbrian ecclesiastical takeover, and he remains dismissive of the British Church.[210] What do we then really know about early Whithorn? The bulk of our knowledge has to come from archaeology, although sadly just a portion of the site has been fully excavated. The earliest phase of the site is difficult to date, but the Latinus stone has been dated to the mid-fifth century.[211] It is now seen as representing a continuous epigraphic tradition and commemorating the death of a certain Latinus,[212] but it has been debated widely as possibly representing the foundation of the church itself.[213] Seen as part of the so-called 'extended latinate' stones it shows direct continuities with the Roman tradition.[214] The earliest phase of settlement construction, associated with the Latinus stone and hence possibly mid-fifth century, has produced scarce finds, but of great infrastructural and technological significance, including a metalled road. The next phase, which can tentatively be placed to begin with the end of the fifth century, is technologically stunning. It includes the employment of high-grade rural technologies such as the usage of plough pebbles (essentially a protective device for the plough, slowing down its wear, which in large quantities are not found until the later Middle Ages),[215] haematite ore smelting and, most astonishingly, the lime production technology as evidenced by remnants of a lime kiln; this technology might have been used for the construction of the church. Additionally, there are

206 Aelred, *Vita Niniani*.

207 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 1–2.

208 Clancy, 'The Real St Ninian', 1–28.

209 Wood, 'Britain and the Continent in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries', 71–82.

210 Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*, 403.

211 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 615. It appears that a far-reaching reconsideration of the whole site awaits us in the next few years. The Cold Case Whithorn project is revising the existing chronologies, perhaps redefining the site in its earliest phase not as a monastery but as a Christian meeting place.

212 Forsyth, 'The Latinus Stone: Whithorn's Earliest Christian Monument', 19–41.

213 Thomas, *Christian Celts*, 106.

214 Forsyth, 'Hic Memoria Perpetua', 115.

215 Brady, 'Just How Far Can You Go with a Pebble?', 61–70.

traces of crucibles used for working bronze.[216] The iron smelting operation might have been used to manufacture 'fittings for the new buildings. These deposits reveal a sophisticated use of the requisite technologies, and the knowledgeable use of regional resources […] [B]y this time the community was sufficiently prosperous to attract merchants with supplies of wine and luxury goods originating in the Mediterranean.'[217] Those contacts included imports of high-quality glass and possibly wine, resulting in a brief (perhaps 20-year long) period of extensive trade that then petered out.[218] This cornucopia of finds has lead recent interpretations to tend towards some form of high-status occupancy at the site in its early stages, to explain its prosperity.[219] The next momentous change came with the Northumbrian dominance in the early[220] or late seventh century.[221] Let us not forget: We are in what is now modern Scotland, far, far away from the cliffs of Dover looking at Gaul

While this is no doubt a short and isolated example it has to astonish us. Here is a community, outside of what is considered the 'borders' of the empire, which operated technology considered to be lost in Britain. It defies all expectations of such a settlement. And while we should not overestimate its broader influence nor take it as an example of a prevailing practice, it shows that in favourable conditions the adaptation did not have to be synonymous with abandonement and was able to preserve a significant technological level. Whithorn shows also that Britain of the middle fifth century retained, albeit on a small scale, the ability which we so much associate with the Empire: That of projecting Romaness outside the borders of the Empire itself.

The excavator himself, Peter Hill, has posed that the earliest phase is connected with the Pelagian diaspora,[222] while his earlier interpretations tended towards Gaulish clerics being responsible for reintroducing all those technological achievements.[223] Charles Thomas has proposed a sub-Roman diocese.[224] The monastery has an early dedication to St Martin, and already

216 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 28.
217 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 77.
218 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 324.
219 Maldonado, 'Burial in Early Medieval Scotland: New Questions', 23.
220 Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria: AD 350-1100*, 111.
221 Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD80-1000*, 24–27; Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 37.
222 Hill, 'Whithorn, Latinus and the Origins of Christianity in Northern Britain', 30.
223 Hill and Campbell, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, 19–20.
224 Charles Thomas, *Whithorn's Christian Beginnings*.

the early *Miracula* makes St Ninian, the purported founder, dedicate it to St Martin.[225]

A possible, meaningful explanation can be constructed: A site under late Roman influence becomes inhabited by a number of exiles from Britain in the immediate sub-Roman period. This community, possibly strengthened from the mid-fifth century onwards, is definitely at least partially literate and Christian (as evidenced for example by the Latinus stone and the assemblage of inscribed stones in the nearby Kirkmadrine, which includes at least two inscriptions for *sacerdotes*, possibly to be interpreted as bishops).[226] Towards the end of the fifth century and beginning of the sixth, the community receives a new impulse, possibly connected with a fresh group of émigrés (probably from Britain), and some sort of high-status connection is either reinstated (if the site had a pre-late-Roman occupation) or initiated. The period is characterised by at least some sort of 'technological resurgence', evidenced by usage of methods, objects and technologies that were unavailable or simply fell out of use at the time in the rest of Britain. This settlement, in accordance with what we can also observe in south-western Cornwall where the phase is longer, enters into a brief period of intense contacts with the Mediterranean world, resulting in numerous high-status imports, including glass, wine, and pottery. It was also almost certainly a productive site at the time. This period is followed by the advent of Northumbrian domination, which although disputed chronologically, would make sense to follow closely after, i.e., already close to the beginning of the seventh century. After that, a Northumbrian see is established, and Bede picks up the thread of historiographical narration.

Whithorn is therefore significant for a number of reasons. First, it might help us understand better the transition period between late Roman and Early Medieval infrastructural models. The technological flourish of the late fifth and early sixth century shows that at least to a certain extent, this change was driven by choices reflecting deep adaptations. The theory that those skills where reintroduced by Gaulish clerics relies on weak foundations – the St Martin dedication and an assumption that such methods were unavailable in Britain at the time. This assumption is unnecessary – we know from the example of post-Roman Bath that large-scale engineering projects that required significant organisational skills and manpower (in this case the demolition of the temple of Sulis Minerva in Bath) could be undertaken

225 *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*, chap. IV.
226 Forsyth, 'Hic Memoria Perpetua', 122–25.

between 450-500.[227] Even if there was a significant émigré contingent, this would only count in favour of the settlement's vitality and not against it.[228] If the technologies were re-used or, in other words, re-introduced at a later stage after a period of break, it only reinforced its significance. Whithorn produced a written tradition relating to the person of Ninian. Even Bede was captivated both by the place and by the person of the saint, and he admits more than usual in his description.[229]

Unusually for him Bede does not hide the fact that Ninian was a Briton, that he engaged in missionary activity, and that he was educated in Rome and connected with the cult of St Martin. For Bede to admit all that is already a lot. We should always be cautious with Bede and his narration, but the curious mention of 'a church of stone' seems to actually correspond with what has been found in the archaeological record. The following 'which the Britons usually do not build' – 'insolito Brettonibus more fecerit' is typical Bede – we probably should not take this statement at face value.

Were those who built Whithorn really emmigrants from Britain? If the interpretation of the site is correct (or at least not way off), it could mean that the minster model was actually if not a British invention then Britain was at least involved in its evolution.[230] This has great consequences for the monastic foundations of the West Midlands and the Hwicce territories that we catch in the charters of the late seventh centuries. Is Whithorn a creation of Roman/sub-Roman Britain? If it was, then the taking over of Whithorn by the Northumbrians in the seventh century needs to be framed in infrastructural terms as a re-use of Roman infrastructure.[231] It also shows that a theory of simple 'contiuity/discontinuity' is mostly useless as a framework in such cases and that the empire could function in the most unlikely of places.

4.2 Wilfrid and the Importing of Memory

Memory is not a static concept. It is also influenced by agency: Aristotle recognised memory as a conscious act, different from recollection; therefore,

227 Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*, 160–61.

228 Which did not have to come from Gaul – as far as I am aware no oxygen isotope analysis has been done, or published on any of the skeletons from Whithorn.

229 HE III.4.

230 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 28, 30.

231 It would also put into question the theory of the 'rapid and dramatic deskilling of Britain's population' in the sub-Roman period, see: Fleming, 'Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy', 34.

it can be influenced and shaped and ordered.[232] In her magisterial study of the art of memory in the western world, Frances Yates made a case that the Early Middle Ages saw a destruction of a concept of 'artificial memory', a memory technique built on associating things with places and concepts in your mind.

> In the barbarised world, the voices of the orators were silenced. People cannot meet together peacefully to listen to speeches when there is no security. Learning retreated into the monasteries and the art of memory for rhetorical purposes became unnecessary, though Quintilianist memorising of a prepared written page might still have been useful. Cassiodorus, one of the founders of monasticism, does not mention the artificial memory in the rhetoric section of his encyclopaedia on the liberal arts. Nor is it mentioned by Isidore of Seville or the Venerable Bede [...] The artificial memory has disappeared.[233]

While memorizing speeches might have fallen out of use, the Early Medieval world was capable of complicated memory structures in everyday life. Their rhetorical forms might have taken a different shape, but the almost mnemonic way of recalling the Roman past was definitely present in the way they have used the past as a resource. While we cannot say if Early Medieval bishops used mind palaces to remember their sermons, we can say that they used architecture to recollect the past. They built mind palaces of the still living idea of Rome.

One particular form of re-use of Roman infrastructure comes to the fore in this context – the building programme of Wilfrid, with its two chief foundations of Ripon (*c.* 672) and Hexham (before 677). These two main sites are accompanied by three other, equally significant churches: Heddon (dedicated to St Andrew before 680, and built close to Milecastle 12 of Hadrian's Wall, chiefly from Roman masonry); Corbridge (also dedicated to St Andrew before 676, on Stanegate, the main military road to the south of Hadrian's Wall and partly built from Roman masonry); Bywell (also dedicated to St Andrew, probably before 709, probably initially made of wood, close to Stanegate).[234] Wilfrid is almost too good when it comes to looking for an example of meaningful, skilful, and quite self-serving re-use of the Roman past and its infrastructure. He was a true product of adaptation of the Roman world.

232 Aristotle, 'On Memory and Recollection', 451b, 18-20.
233 Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 53.
234 Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, 51.

Wilfrid was making use of the extremely dense and important area centred on the eastern end of Hadrian's Wall. The context of this zone is rich in traces of the extensive use of the resources of the past. At least four forts in the area were continuously occupied well into the fifth and maybe sixth century,[235] with churches in all of them.[236] Oswiu's palace *Ad Murum* (the name gives us a hint) must have been close to one of those sites, showing the attachment of the Northumbrian royal dynasty to the symbolic capital that this Roman past could have provided. It was chosen to assert Oswiu's power as the site of the baptism of both Peada of Mercia and Sigebert II of Essex – a significant distance from the seats of power of both those rulers.[237] There is every reason to believe that the church in the Chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall in Bradwell-on-Sea (Essex), founded by Chad, dispatched to evangelise the East Saxons of Sigebert, was built from Roman brick in imitation of Roman buildings. Perhaps it continued the tradition of re-use of the Tyne and Wear estuaries region. Wilfrid's activity in this zone and in Northumbria in general must have tapped into those resources of the past and to those traditions, but in doing so he engaged in a skilful reworking of the material of memory that he had at his disposal. Like Augustine six decades before, he wanted to achieve an uncontested claim to a pure Roman legitimacy, and in doing so he had to import part of the memory of Rome on his own terms.

Wilfrid (*c.* 633-c.709) is a divisive figure in the history of the early English Church. His conflict with Theodore, his travels to Rome, and his activity on the Roman side at Whitby often put him in stark opposition to Irish Christianity and created the picture of a starkly Roman cleric. But he was also under considerable influence from both the Frankish Church and Columbianian monasticism.[238] Notwithstanding all facets of his complicated character and personality, he seemed to be adept at using the Roman past (and Roman present for that matter) and Roman infrastructural resources to his advantage.

Already the description of the Hexham abbey church from his *Vita* shows what is afoot here.[239] It is a church so magnificent that nothing can compare with it 'north of the Alps'. It is an apostolic foundation (for St Andrew), with crypts of 'dressed stone', and 'many columns' support

235 Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, 231.
236 Collins, 'Military Communities and Transformation', 24–25.
237 HE III.21, 24.
238 Coates, 'The Construction of Episcopal Sanctity in Early Anglo-Saxon England', 2.
239 Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, chap. 22.

it. How successful this exercise in creating Roman memory was can be attested by reading the twelfth century account by William of Malmesbury in *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, where he writes that those who have visited Italy, 'when they see the manner in which Hexham is built, they swear it gives them a mental picture of the best Roman work, so true it is, that the harm caused by time and wear has not detracted from the beauty of that place'.[240]

Wilfrid's Northumbrian links were stronger with Ripon than with Hexham, and indeed Wilfrid was buried there.[241] Both of those places were of enormous importance and the description of the church at Ripon is just as rich, but other geographical factors could be at play – like for example the distance to the bishop's seat at York and Wilfrid's family connections with Deira.[242] Ripon was also both an Irish and, before that, possibly a pagan site, which would make it extremely important in the overall, Romanising and Christianising programme of Wilfrid.[243] The crypt of the church at Ripon also reused Roman masonry from the nearby *Isurium Brigantium*,[244] modern Aldborough, a civitas capital and an important node on Dere Street, with a remarkably preserved layout of the Roman town.[245]

The only surviving elements of the churches of Ripon and Hexham dating from the times of Wilfrid are the crypts (and foundations of external walls in Hexham). Both enjoy elaborate plans, but the one at Hexham is bigger and more complicated.[246] It consists of a large chamber, three smaller ones, and a set of winding corridors. Its plan invokes the catacombs of Rome and the subterranean arrangements of St Paul outside the Walls.[247] The Roman example here is evident – the most famous of the crypts of Rome and the first one built was that of Gregory the Great.[248] The crypt makes extensive use of cut stone from Corbridge, a Roman fort on the other side of the river, 7 kilometers

240 William of Malmesbury, *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 389.

241 Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', 110.

242 Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, chap. 17.

243 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 185–86.

244 Jones, 'Recent Discoveries at Ripon Cathedral', 74; Peers, 'Recent Discoveries in the Minsters of Ripon and York', 116.

245 The village church of Aldborough still occupies the northern part of the forum of Isurium Brigantium, see: Charlesworth, *Aldborough Roman Town and Museum*, 6.

246 McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture*, 67.

247 Bailey, O'Sullivan, and Rackham, 'Excavations over St. Wilfrid's Crypt at Hexham, 1978', 145–57; Bailey, 'St Wilfrid, Ripon and Hexham', 3–26.

248 Angenendt, 'Fear, Hope, Death and Salvation', 293; McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture*, 31. There is also the possibility of an inspiration through burial chambers like the Hypogée des Dunes at Poitiers: Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture', 3.

from Hexham.[249] The winding passages prompted a series of performative interpretations of the space – as a processional recreation of catacombs, filled with relics, dimly lit, and disorientating; they are also artificial.[250] They are a distilled form of a catacomb, but they are a trick, not hewn in stone, but built and buried.[251] Both crypts escape any clear classification – they do not easily fit in any known typology of crypts, even though they do exhibit certain parallels with crypts at St Laurent in Grenoble and St Valentino in Rome.[252] The use of Roman material seems to have been crucial for the feeling of sancity and holiness.[253] The architect working for Wilfrid could allow himself such freedom in building those catacombs because of the shared memory of Rome with their chosen audience.[254] This somewhat free-form interpretation, remembering *res* and not *verba*, worked, because what is and what was Roman still had currency. Those crypts are a *trompe-l'œil* of Rome, imitations so well fitting in our (and indeed seventh century) expectations of what is Roman that they deceive not only the eye, but also, when filled with the now missing paraphernalia of candles, incense, and relics, the fingers and noses of their visitors. These crypts are a form of citation practice.

We need to interpret these three elements – Roman material, the performative aspect, and artificiality – closely together. Taken as parts of a larger programme, they are a physical mnemonic device, not dissimilar to mind-palaces, where their form, their medium, and their performativity recalls Rome.[255] Filled with relics (that we are missing now, but which were perhaps the most important elements of this equation), these crypts recreated Rome in a form of 'artificial memory'. The physical act of walking through them would take visitors back to Rome – both to the Rome of their Christian present and the Rome of the imperial past. How well it worked we know thanks to the work of William of Malmesbury, where he recalls 'a **mental** [MF] picture of the best Roman work'.[256] The crypts of Ripon and

249 It has been noted that the building material was obtained not through the robbing of ruins but through 'systematic demolition of standing [Roman] buildings': Bidwell, 'Wilfrid and Hexham: The Anglo-Saxon Crypt', 162.

250 Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saint*, 93.

251 Cambridge, 'The Sources and Function of Wilfrid's Architecture at Ripon and Hexham'.

252 Bailey, 'St Wilfrid, Ripon and Hexham', 6, 20.

253 Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing', n. 21.

254 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 116.

255 One is of course reminded of the 'medium is the message' principle of Marshal McLuhan, and especially the example of the light bulb, where the presence of a particular medium creates a specific environment and creates space by its existence alone, see McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

256 William of Malmesbury, *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 389.

Hexham are mnemonic mind-palaces brought to life. They are also a form of imported memory – imported from across the river and from Rome itself.[257]

It can be argued that they were essential for Wilfrid personally. What do you do when the memory of Rome is crucial for both your personal survival and your ideology, and so it happens that not much is available at hand? You import memory – both physically (the stones of Corbridge – *Corstopitum*) and ideologically in the form of a Continental 'Roman' church. What you create is an exercise in artificial memory which both creates and recalls the memory of Rome. Importing memory and mnemonic techniques were not unknown in Britain: Augustine brought with him numerous 'Roman' books, among them CCCC MS286, the Gospels of St Augustine, which in their illuminations show clever use of mnemonic techniques. Wilfrid's program re-used both the existing Roman infrastructure and the *locus* in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall, but did so on a spot and on terms absolutely dictated by the founder. It is a *tour de force* of the art of memory, rooted in practices known well on the island.

After all, as has been argued by some theoreticians, memory is not necessarily a 'retention of associations' but a 'recall of beliefs'.[258] Wilfrid, with his relic-filled, thoroughly Roman crypts, was trying to engage exactly in this: A recall of belief in Rome. It is hard to see the use of Roman masonry at Hexham as purely opportunistic (although we should never exclude it as a factor, as well as never ignore the social and economic impact that such building programmes had).[259] It goes beyond simple *spolia* usage, as it creates the fabric of the 'new' Roman infrastructure. This is an excellent example of what Mary Carruthers has called an 'architectural mnemonic'.[260] For this trick to work Wilfrid's environment must have still felt as a widely adapted but tangibly recognisable world of the empire. Those catacombs were meant to be read like *florilegia* – memory aids for things which were already familiar.[261]

These crypts (and, perhaps, these churches) have been seen by some as aberrations, atypical examples that engage in conscious (but also slightly perplexing for their contemporaries) anachronism.[262] Their programme seems to not have been repeated at such scale, although possibly there are

257 Imitating Rome was important for the early English Church and took many forms, taking a form similar to a kind of devotion: Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the Early English Church', 115–37.
258 Rozeboom, 'The Concept of "Memory"', 329–68.
259 Padberg, *Mission und Christianisierung*, 296–97.
260 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 71.
261 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 220.
262 Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, 93.

other smaller attempts, also northern, like the one at Escomb. Their building is something akin to the churches of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth 'built in the Roman manner'.[263] They are essentially an elaborate trick – both of memory and of infrastructure. Those crypts import memory, but they do so by using local Roman infrastructural resources as well – they attempt to create an illusion of continuity. Thus, they are both a strategy of adaptation and of activation. Especially complicated are the ways in which societies or groups tend to remember – the way it happens is rarely one-sided.[264] Although it has been argued that in the West at least remembrance tended to respect a linear perspective of the progression of time, the examples of Hexham and Ripon show that because of the inherent value that the past had in the Early Middle Ages, infrastructural resources could evoke complicated memory patterns for the societies using them.[265] One can remember askew.

'In fact there seems to be more surviving work of seventh-century Gallic stonemasons in England than in the territories of the Merovingians themselves',[266] Ian Wood has written about the magnificent work to be found in Wearmouth and Jarrow. We should never underestimate the ability of the inhabitants of Early Medieval Britain to engage in the trends, in this case architectural ones, common in the wider post-Roman West. How this came to pass is also partly due to a very different kind of infrastructure: The social one. Whether they are the glass-makers invited by Benedict Biscop to adorn Wearmouth-Jarrow, or Wilfrid's extensive Gaulish and Italian contacts, the infrastructural afterlife of Rome also occured very much on the social plane. Through those contacts but also through instruments like the witness-lists of charters people were drawn into the world of stones. Wilfrid's importation of memory or the Mercian kings' attempts at using Roman infrastructure to project their power would be meaningless unless the social infrastrutures were actually able to receive the fruits of those adaptations.

As a coda to Wilfrid's landscapes of re-use, it is worth mentioning Alcuin and his *On the Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* where he engages in a similar exercise, this time on a literary field. In the contex of the eighth century he takes a classical form of *encomium Urbis* – which he knew through

263 Wearmouth-Jarrow especially shines as an example of a similar strategy, imitating Rome on a similar scale, see: Ó Carragáin, *The City of Rome and the World of Bede*, esp. 1-4.
264 Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.
265 Rowlands, 'The Role of Memory in the Transmission of Culture', 143.
266 Wood, 'Art and Architecture of Western Europe', 763.

works such as that of Priscian – and uses it to import the memory of Rome to York. It has even been suggested that he reaches here for the big guns and uses Aeneid as his chief example.[267] His process is strikingly similar to the ventures of the Gregorian mission, Wilfrid and charter drafters – a classical form (again, is the medium the message?), Roman building blocks, and a clean slate.

Did Alcuin actually know much about the Roman past of his city? When it comes to the facts, then he very probably did not. But he was surrounded by its built inheritance that was impossible to ignore. Moreover, he was undeniably writing this history for a fledging urban community, a community recognizable as a unity, as an urban *patria.* Many factors were at play here (nostalgia being not least of them), but the skillful use of the Roman past to build up a Christian present is reminiscent of what Wilfrid was achieving with his churches.[268]

5. Conclusions

The first three generations of clerics involved in the parallel re-Christianisation of the English seemed to have been concerned with an urgency to reintegrate Britain in to the ecclesiastical framework driven by an imperial past but also by an imperial present. To that effect, they skilfully employed numerous elements of residual Roman infrastructure, and sometimes (like Augustine in Kent or Wilfrid in Northumbria) engaged in importing memory in order to legitimise and strengthen their position. What emerges from this analysis of the activities of the Church when it comes to Roman infrastructure in Early Medieval England is an interesting pattern of the Church taking control of the past. It involved complicated arrangements of management and governance. The symbolic landscapes and the skilful taking-over of what we can call post-Roman property was a perfect example of how the Early Medieval Church could engage in complicated structures of re-use.

Perhaps one of the most often overlooked aspects of the role of the Church in the re-use of Roman infrastructure is the frequent involvement of women. The role of women in reactivating the Roman heritage in Early Medieval England is profound: Bertha in Kent, Aethelburh in Northumbria and later also in Kent, Bertana in Bath, Athelthryth in Hexham, and Aethelburh in

267 Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, lxxxix.
268 Coates, 'The Bishop as Benefactor and Civic Patron', 533.

Barking.[269] They are powerful actresses not only in the process of Christianisation but also in its 'imperial aspect' – they are directly addressed by popes, receive sumptuous endowments for their foundations and, as the discussed example of Bertha shows well, sometimes lead a rather independent Christianisation policy, with its own agenda for the re-use of Roman tradition and infrastructure, strongly connected with Frankish influence. There is definitely much more to be uncovered about this connection, especially in Northumbria. The strength of the female lead in Early Medieval England is impossible to miss. The popes Gregory and Boniface V seem to have well recognised their political and ecclesiastical potential.

One should not forget though that the lay elites were an important partner in this scheme and benefited from it directly. Their ability to activate former Roman governance resources on their own was limited. The Church could provide a way to integrate those resources in the fabric of the Early Medieval polities, and at the same time give rulers the boon of a successor status. The imperial undertones present in this ecclesiastical/royal interface should not be downplayed.

The 'importing of memory', which less kind minds might just call the manipulation of the past, was perhaps not an overreaching agenda, although the instances of it that we have – Augustine's Kent, Wilfrid's Northumbria, or Alcuin's York – are without a doubt significant. The Church recognised that the Roman infrastructure was of great value as a resource, but it also saw the need to claim it ideologically as its own, creating topographies and paths through the modes of re-use. Overall, it was an infrastructural success story.

269 See: Foot, 'Flores ecclesiae. Women in Early Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', 173–86; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*; Wood, 'Monasteries and the Geography of Power in the Age of Bede'; Yorke, 'Queen Balthilds "Monastic Policy" and the Origins of Female Religious Houses in Southern England', 7–16.

Epilogue

Reunion tours are oftentimes mirred in problems. Cover acts, on the other hand, can provoke interpretations not even considered by original creators. Both of them cannot exist without the infrastructure of the past. Writing about those infrastructures might not seem glamorous. It might not even seem necessary. At the first glance, it involves handling a mundane subject, talking about stones and bricks and mortar. But those elements converge in structures that lie at the bottom of everything we must analyse if we are to understand the Late Antique and Early Medieval transition.

Throughout this book I have tried to argue that infrastructures have a deeper meaning and that, like empires, they sometimes refuse to die.[1] They enjoy a peculiar kind of afterlife in which they manage to exert influence on land and in society for a long time after their original creators are gone. Their materiality enables or at least helps the survival of immaterial elements: Laws, governance practices, even religions. While infrastructures can also collapse and decay, they rarely do that overnight. They still exist and even in ruins can exert immense influence.

In this book we have seen that the narrative of infrastructural survival is intertwined with all the major narratives, including political, social, and religious. The story of Roman roads in charters shines a new light on the internal organization of Late Antique and Early Medieval societies as well as on the structure of the land they used. The account of the fate of former Roman urban spaces helps to better recognize regionalized political organization in Britain, forms of land ownership, survivals of Roman Vulgar Law. The relationship of the Church with Roman infrastructures provides us with a better understanding not only of the Christianisation process but also the connections, material and symbolic, of early England with the wider world, imperial ideas and intellectual circles of post-Roman Europe. Not only people but also infrastructures bound Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain to Merovingian Gaul, Gregorian Rome or Byzantine Constantinople.

'Infrastructural history' or even 'infrastructural biography' is necessary in order to really understand the processes behind transformative periods in history. One of the major points of this book is that the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy used as a methodological framework for analysing post-Roman West is largely useless; for infrastructures are resources that can be deactivated and reactivated. We have seen how roads could change

1 Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*.

their function depending on the ability of the polities controlling them to use them as governance resources. Urban spaces could perform a variety of functions, practical and symbolic, depending on the circumstances of their re-use. We have demonstrated how the Church, after almost two centuries, managed to reactivate substantial portions of Roman past infrastructures in Britain for purposes similar to those seen on the Continent, sometimes with even more striking results. In many ways the polities and societies of Early Medieval Britain still reacted in a perfectly 'Roman way'. What mattered for this process was the maintenance of distinction.

The infrastructures presented in this book underwent open-ended adaptations, sometimes on an immense scale – roads that instead of being used to move goods became boundary markers, urban spaces that decayed as cities but provided political authority nevertheless, Roman walled enclosures that instead of defending an empire strengthened Christianity. Seeing this is perhaps only possible by looking for the 'world elsewhere' – joining together the role of ideological and religious factors with those that are political and material.[2] Peter Brown has called for historians to listen to the 'background noise of civilisation', by which he meant the 'little men charged with the humble task of reproducing a culture from one generation to another'.[3] This 'background noise' is not only those men and women but also infrastructure – it hums as a constant backdrop of adaptations, sometimes with a different pitch and different strength but always there, even when one kind of source tends to ignore it at a particular moment. In this respect, even though this book straddles the periods of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, it is methodologically indebted chiefly to the theoretical framework of Late Antiquity. Not simply because it stresses the transformation instead of decline or progress, but because it became a 'field of cultural production'[4] of its own, a field of 'historical production' that puts a holistic approach to sources and methodologies in a prominent place in its theoretical framework.

I have argued that while Roman infrastructures in post-Roman Britain underwent substantial functional and material adaptations and while the legal and governance framework of their use went through transformations as well, this can hardly be seen as evidence for those infrastructures becoming irrelevant. Throughout the period their existence was important,

2 On implementing that Brownian ideal see: Wood, '"There Is a World Elsewhere": The World of Late Antiquity', 17–43.

3 Brown, 'The Field of Late Antiquity', 12; men and *women* we should add.

4 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

but perhaps became most significant after the arrival of the Gregorian mission in 597, when in rapid succession they played a vital role on the one hand in the success of Christianisation (which as I have argued here was not only a religious but also an imperial endeavour), and on the other in the political positioning of the rulers of some polities as *Nachfolger* of the Roman empire. This crucial period of the first half of the seventh century saw a reactivation of those infrastructures as governance resources, with a substantial role for the Church. It has become increasingly clear that the potential of those infrastructures and their connection with *Romanitas* and what we could call the 'grammar of power' was not lost to contemporary actors. It also had profound consequences for their identity.

There is more. Writing narratives of collapse and decline based on the functionally transformed landscapes and societies of Britain is misleading; the Church is a factor which cannot be excluded from any framing attempting to comprehensively explain those transformations; and *Romanitas*-connected symbolic capital had its tangible material equivalent in the past Roman infrastructures that survived or were remembered in Early Medieval Britain. All this of course does not deny the momentous changes that Britain underwent.[5] But Britain did not crash out of the Roman Empire: It waltzed out of it.

Not everything could be included in this work – it relies on a number of case studies and a functional and methodological framework that is by necessity selective. I have attempted interdisciplinary approaches, a comparative perspective and broad methodologies where it was possible and viable. I have tried to give equal footing for material and symbolic functions of infrastructures and present the overview of at least some of them. One might argue that the true impact of the afterlife of Roman infrastructure in post-Roman Britain, the post-Roman West, and post-Roman Europe, can only be seen in the future through collaborative endeavour. The biggest chance for future research lies in the work of scholars from different disciplines providing collective output, and shedding light on the fate of infrastructures in Late Antique and Early Medieval Europe.

As much as I have strived for the most complete view of the afterlife of Roman infrastructures in the Early Medieval period in Britain, some elements of the puzzle remain unresolved. Possibly the greatest challenge for any researcher working on the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods is to admit that we will simply never know with absolute certainty how

5 For a problematisation of concurrent processes of change and stability in the post-Roman West see essays collected in: Noble, ed., *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*.

certain processes occurred. Nowhere is this more evident than in the British context. This led us to posit 'meaningful explanations' to the phenomena that we witness in the written sources and the archaeological record. Akin to the sociological practice of the Weberian *Verstehen* – trying to understand the phenomena from the point of view of the social actors – we can only try to understand them from the point of view of key actors in the processes and events that we describe here.[6]

This means that we have to accept our limits and rethink our terminologies. We have to accept that perhaps a full explanation of the phenomena that we focus on here is impossible to achieve. But this should not stop us from proposing meaningful explanations of what we can witness in historical records in an attempt to understand the past, i.e., explanations that to the best of our ability interpret the available evidence and argue such interpretation in logical sequence from previous scholarship.[7] Those limits are also sometimes visible in the terminology that we use, suspended between the past and the future of our disciplines.

While the stories of various infrastructures in this book might sound mundane and the search for the ways and means in which they were used by the inhabitants of Late Antique and Early Medieval Britain difficult, they tell us a lot about the island on which Augustine landed in 597. They tell the story of how the imperial idea was sometimes so extensively transformed as to be mistaken for collapse. They show that through adaptation and in many different ways Britain went through its very own set of Late Antiquities and highlight how important the Roman past was to the forging of the Early Middle Ages.

6 Martin, *Verstehen: The Uses of Understanding in Social Science*.

7 Maybe meaningful explanations are at least some form of an answer to the problem of narrative in historiography, which question has been brilliantly summarised in: White, 'The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory', 1–33.

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Index

Abergavenny 75
Aberthin 76
Ackling Dyke 53
Ad Murum (palace) 18, 187
Aegean 23, 117
Aelfric 139
Aelred of Rieveaulx 182
Aethelbald (king of Merica) 64,
Aethelberht (king of Kent) 18, 41, 50, 56, 145-146, 157, 159-161, 164, 171-172, 179
Aethelburh (queen of Northumbria) 154, 192
Aethelred (king of Mercia) 125, 179
Aethelthryth (abbess) 192
Africa 13, 32, 98, 114, 148
Akeman Street 52, 103
Alban (martyr) 158-159
Alcester 58, 124
Alcuin of York 191-192
Aldborough 188
Aldhelm 64, 69, 177
Alexandria 117
Alfred (king of Wessex) 52, 54
Ambrosiani, Björn 40
Ammianus Marcellinus 148
Ancaster 119
Annegray 151
Ansith (noblewoman) 64
Anthemius (emperor) 89
Arcadius (emperor) 100, 103
Aristotle 185
Arles 123, 137
Armorica 106-107
Arthur 85
Arwystyl (bishop) 74
Aston Clinton 103
Aston, Michael 118
Augustine of Canterbury 13, 50, 65, 156-158, 160-161, 163-168, 176, 181, 187, 190, 192, 198

Bagaudae 93
Balkans 23
Barker, Eric 60
Barker, Philip 115
Barking 152, 193
Bass (priest) 152
Bates, David 47, 73
Bath 121, 128, 131, 138, 140, 152, 177-180, 184, 192
Bavaria 40, 64, 126
Bede 14-15, 17-18, 22, 39, 48, 59, 61, 84, 120, 128, 134, 136, 156-166, 171, 176-177, 182, 184-186
Belisarius 13
Benedict Biscop 22, 191
Berkshire 52, 60
Bernicia 123
Bertana (abbess) 177, 192
Bertha (queen of Kent) 18, 154, 156-157, 160-161, 165, 170-171, 192
Bethlehem 156
Biddle, Martin 39
Billingford 94, 175
Binchester 163
Birdoswald 91-92
Birinus (bishop) 92, 104
Bisceopesdun 58
Boudic 118
Blacklands 169
Blair, John 143, 160, 173
Boniface V (pope) 154, 193
Boniface (bishop) 65
Bourdieu, Pierre 16
Bradbury Rings 53
Bradley, Richard 29
Bradwell-on-Sea 187
Bredicot 58
Breeze, Andrew 95
Brihtwald (archbishop) 124
Brixworth 180-181
Broadway 58
Brooks, Nicholas 56, 58-59, 65-67
Brown, Peter 171, 196
Bruttium 93
Burgh Castle 134, 152
Bywell 186

Cadbury Castle 101
Caedwalla (king of Wessex) 52
Caerphilly 76
Caister-on-Sea 134
Caistor-by-Norwich 172
Campbell, James 41, 134
Canterbury 40-41, 60, 66, 70, 94, 121, 124-126, 136, 145, 152, 154, 157, 160, 162, 164, 166-172, 176
Cardiff 76
Carlisle 176
Carmarthen 77
Carolingians 21
Carruthers, Mary 190
Carver, Martin 33, 38-39
Ceawlin (king of Wessex) 128
Cecin Pennicelli 75
Chad (abbot) 137, 187
Charles-Edwards, T.M. 72
Cheddar (royal estate) 33
Chedworth 107
Chepstow 76
Chertsey 135
Cheshire 58, 122
Chester 44, 86-87, 106, 122-125, 155
Chichester 88, 121, 175

Chlothar I (king of the Franks) 74
Christie, Neil 126
Cirencester 63, 88, 95, 105, 109, 128, 130, 139
Coenwulf 181
Colchester 88, 156
Columbanus 151
Comereg (bishop) 74
Commail (king of the Britons) 128
Condida (king of the Britons) 128
Constantine I (emperor) 156-157, 160, 168, 172
Constantine III (emperor) 92
Constantinople 40, 74, 93, 118, 165, 169, 172, 195
Constantius of Lyon 88
Cool, Hilary 91
Corbridge 60, 175, 186, 188, 190
Cornwall 116, 184
Corsica 173
Coulanges, Fustel de 38
Cowbridge 76
Crewe 122
Crux Easton 66
Cuthwin (king of Wessex) 128
Cynegils (king of Wessex) 104
Cyprus 116

Dagobert I (king of the Franks) 154, 179
Danube (river) 144, 124
Dark, Kenneth 95
Davies, Wendy 11, 23, 45, 72, 74-75, 77-79
Deganwy 134
Deira 188
Dere Street 63, 188
Devon 119
Dijon 35
Diocletian (emperor) 31
Dolaucothi 77, 81
Dommoc 175
Donatus 54
Dorchester-on-Thames 94, 102-105, 175
Dover 154, 183
Droitwich 57-58, 132
Dubricius (bishop) 74
Dyrham, battle of 59, 128

Eadbald (king of Kent) 154
Eadred (king of the English) 48
Eadric (king of Kent) 66
East Anglia 147, 155
Ecgberht (king of Kent) 152
Ecgfrith (king of Mercia) 181
Edilfyw (bishop) 74
Egypt 13
Elguoret 75
Elidon 76
Ellgnou 76
Elmham 94, 175
Enborne (river) 61
Ermine Street 53
Escomb 163, 191
Essex 94, 187
Eusebius of Cesarea 156
Eventide 58
Everitt, Alan 66
Evesham 58, 132
Exeter 90, 117, 121, 173, 176

Farinmail (king) 128
Faustus of Riez 89
Finberg, Herbert 111
Flixborough 99
Fordwich 66
Forthhere (bishop) 124
Fosse Way 53
Francia 67, 104, 142, 154 (*see also*: Gaul)
Freisinger Moos 62
Frere, Sheppard 94, 117
Frisia 99
Fulda 50
Fulford, Michael. 115

Galloway 181
Gaudentius, vicar of Africa 148
Gaul 23, 32, 68, 74, 87-91, 95, 97, 105-106, 120, 123, 149-150, 163, 171-172, 176, 179, 183-185, 191, 195
George, Karen 110
Germanus of Auxerre 87-88, 107, 114, 159
Gerrard, James 84, 94-95, 118
Gibbon, Edward 22
Gildas 14, 18, 85, 92-93, 95, 108-113, 133, 142, 148, 163
Gloucester 105, 127, 128, 139, 172-173, 176, 179
Gloucestershire 59, 129
Goffart, Walter 110
Goldberger, Paul 40
Goodier, Ann 55
Goths 13, 93
governance 16, 18, 22-25, 42, 44, 49, 53, 56-59, 65, 68, 70-71, 78, 80, 82, 101, 104-105, 107, 113, 119-121, 129-131, 138-139, 141, 143-145, 147, 152, 155, 159-160, 162, 172, 177, 179-180, 192-193, 195-197
Gratian (emperor) 92, 96
Grecielus (bishop) 74
Gregory of Tours 35
Gregory the Great (pope) 13, 18, 23, 120, 156-168, 170, 173, 176, 181, 188, 193
Gregory (bishop) of Langres 35
Grenoble 189
Guthrum (king of East Anglia) 52
Gwrwan (bishop) 74
Gwyddlon (bishop) 74
Haase, Carl 36
Hadrian, abbot 69, 161
Hadrian's Wall 43, 83, 91, 99, 105, 110, 147, 181, 186-187, 190
Hall, Alaric 89

Halsall, Guy 39
Hammer, Carl I. 40
Hampshire 52
Harries, Jill 123
Heddon 186
Helena (empress) 156-157, 160
Henley 103
Herebald, abbot 61-62
Hereford 72, 175
Hertford 178
Hertfordshire 97
Hexham 14, 152, 175, 186-192
Heybridge 94
Higham, Nicholas 68, 130
Hill, Peter 183
Hines, John 37
Hodges, Richard 38-39
Honorius (emperor) 92-93, 100, 103
Housesteads 91
Howe, Nicholas 137, 139
Hwicce 52, 59, 81, 97, 129, 139, 172, 177-179, 185

Icknield Way 53
Ilchester 88, 113, 115, 119
Ine (king of Wessex) 54
Ipplepen 119
Isenmann, Eberhard 38
Isidore of Seville 186
Italy 13, 30, 32, 165, 188

Jaspers, Karl. 27
John (bishop) of Beverley 61
John, Eric 67
Justin I (emperor) 100
Julian (emperor) 148
Junapeius (bishop) 74
Justinian I (emperor) 74, 118, 173

Kelly, Susan 66, 136
Kenchester 175
Kent 13, 31, 49-50, 65-66, 68-70, 83, 86-87, 111-112, 125-126, 145-146, 153-156, 159, 161, 166-169, 171, 174, 176-177, 192-193
King, Anthony D. 137
Kirkmadrine 184
Koselleck, Reinhart 49
Koziol, Geoffrey 47

Landau, Georg 54
Lane, Alan 115
Langres 35
Lann Cinmarch 76
Lann Dinuil 76
Lann Garth 75
Latin 34, 50, 53-55, 63, 66, 72-75, 83, 88-89, 109, 116, 120, 136, 139-140, 161
Latinus 181, 184
Leicester 90, 175, 180-181
Leontius of Neapolis 116
Levison, Wilhelm 153
Libius Severus (emperor) 99
Litchfield 71, 175, 181
Liddington 62
Liebeschuetz, Wolf 32, 106, 112
Limassol 116
Lincoln 41, 105-106, 118, 173, 175-176
Lindisfarne 175
Lindsey 175
Liudhard (bishop) 165
Llan Petyr 76
Llanarth 75
Llancarfan 71
Llandaff 45-48, 71-73, 75-77
Llandeilo 71
Llandeilo Fawr 77
Llandeilo'r Fan 75-77
Llandovery 77
Llangovan 76
Lombards 13
London 41, 44, 52, 57-58, 103, 121, 125-126, 134-135, 137, 157, 163-164, 167-170, 175
Los Angeles 36
Loseby, Simon 84
Loughor 76-77
Lupus of Troyes 114
Luxeuil 151
Lyminge 153-155

Maddicott, John 57-58
Magnus Maximus 79, 101
Mamouric 76
Mansuetus (bishop) 106
Marcus (usurper) 92
Maurice (emperor) 164-165
Mayr-Harting, Henry 163
McKitterick, Rosamond 139
Mead Way 56
Mellitus (bishop) 159
Mercia 59, 64, 96, 122, 125, 130, 179-180, 187
Merovingians 152, 191
Metz 38, 172
Middlewich 58
Mildenhall 63
Monmouth 75-76
Naismith, Rory 120
Nantwich 58
Neath 76
Nennius 133
Newcastle 60
Ninian (missionary) 181-185
Noricum 114
North Downs 70
North Sea 102
Northumbria 96, 154, 164, 176, 187, 192-193
Northwich 58

Offa (king of Mercia) 156, 180
Offa's Dyke 68

Old English 34, 43, 50, 52-54, 79, 88-89, 137, 139-140, 179
Oosthuizen, Susan 11, 23
Orderic Vitalis 63
Osric (king of the Hwicce) 177-180
Oswald (king of Northumbria) 154, 157, 179
Oswine (king of Kent) 154
Oswiu (king of Northumbria) 18, 187
Ottonians 21
Oudoceus (bishop) 73-74, 77

Pannonia 126, 173
Paris 97, 170
Patching 99
Patrick (bishop) 95
Paulinus (bishop) 160
Peada (king of Mercia) 187
Pelagius II (pope) 165
Penn Onn 76
Pennines 59, 102
Picts 182
Piercebridge 60, 91
Pirenne, Henri 29
Pohl, Walter 30
Polemius Silvius 176
polity, concept of 18, 22-23, 25, 42, 45, 58-59, 70, 130, 173, 177 (*see also*: state)
Pontefract 63
Poundbury 104
Powys 79
Priscian 54, 192
Procopius 118, 149-150

Radegund, queen 156
Ravenna 93
Reculver 60, 152, 168
Reichsdörfer 37
Reynolds, Susan 37
Rhineland (*also* Rhine valley) 23, 97
Richborough 100
Rigold, Stuart 135
Riothamus 89, 99
Ripon 14, 48, 152, 186, 188-189, 191
Riv Brein 76
Rochester 45, 52, 56-57, 60, 69-70, 88, 136, 145, 153, 167, 169, 172, 175
Roman Empire 13, 28, 31, 58, 71, 87, 90, 101, 104, 118, 130, 137-138, 142, 154, 158, 163, 197
Romanitas (*also* Romanness) 16, 30, 49, 59, 72, 79, 81-82, 86, 95-96, 104, 109-110, 116, 121, 124, 126, 129-130, 135-136, 141-142, 146-147, 154, 158, 180-181, 197
Roskams, Steve 26
Rouen 135

Sardinia 159
Scharer, Anton 153
Scotland 36, 181, 183
Scull, Christopher 37
Selsey 175
Shaftesbury 135
Shavington 122
Sicily 13
Sigebert II (king of Burgundy) 187
Silchester 88, 90, 94, 103-104, 113, 119
Silchester Dykes 103
Sixtus II (pope) 158
Sixtus (martyr) 158
South Cadbury 118
South Shields 91
Spain 13, 31, 90, 95, 137
Speed, Gavin 94, 129
St Albans 87-88
St David's 72
Staffordshire 53
Stanegate 186
state, concept of 16-18, 23-24, 32, 58, 107, 122, 133-134, 142, 149, 151-152, 161 (*see also*: polity)
Stenton, Frank 128
Stodmarsh 66
Stone-by-Faversham 169
Stour (river) 66
Stratford-sub-Castle 127
Stratford-upon-Avon 58
Stretton Bridge 53
Stretton Grandison 53
Surrey 49
Sweden 40
Symmachus the Defensor 173
Syria 13

Taylor, Jeremy 138
Teilo (bishop) 74-75
Thanet, island 66
Theodore of Tarsus 50, 65, 69, 152, 161-162, 171, 175-176, 178-179, 187
Theodosius II (emperor) 100
Thomas Aquinas 14
Tintagel 101, 116
Tito, functionary 116
Tours 106, 125, 170
Towy (river) 77
Troyes 115
Tyne (river) 187

Ulpian (jurist) 44
Urban (bishop) 72
Urkundenlandschaft 45, 57
Usk (river) 75-76
Valentinian III (emperor) 100
Valerian (emperor) 111
Vandals 98
Verulamium *see* St Albans
Villa Fratrus 76
Vindolanda 147
Visigoths 98-99, 137
Vitalian (pope) 152
Vorteporis 116, 118

Wacher, John 41
Wales 45, 48, 59, 74, 78, 80-82, 111, 134
Walton Castle 152, 175
Ward-Perkins, Brian 27, 30, 169
Warwickshire 57-59
Watling Street 44, 52, 56, 70, 167
Wear (river) 187
Wearmouth-Jarrow (*also* Monkwearmouth and Jarrow) 152, 191
Weber, Max 37
Wessex (*also* West Saxons) 52, 66, 91, 96, 104, 130, 134, 153
West Heslerton 24, 101-102, 104
West Midlands 185
Whitby 187
Whithorn 36, 181-185
Wickham, Chris 35, 143
Wihtred, comes 64
Wihtred (king of Kent) 145-146
Wilfrid 17, 50-51, 179-181, 185-190, 192
William of Malmesbury 188-189
William the Conqueror 63
Wilmott, Tony 95
Wiltshire 53, 62
Winchester 88, 97, 104-105, 132, 137, 175
Wolverton 58
Wonastow 76
Wood, Ian 11, 182, 191
Woods, David 95
Woolf, Alex 105
Worcester 58, 139, 172, 175-176
Worcestershire 59, 129
Wormald, Patrick 145
Wormleighton 57-58
Wroxeter 94, 100, 115-116, 119, 176
Wulfstan (archbishop) 135
Würzburg 50

Xanten 33

Yates, Frances 186
Yeavering 29, 126
York 41, 94-95, 119, 121, 132, 135, 137, 156, 160, 163, 175, 188, 191-193
Yorke, Barbara 30, 88, 96, 108, 126
Yorkshire 24, 63, 101

Zosimos 92

Early Medieval Britain was more Roman than we think. The Roman Empire left vast infrastructural resources on the island. These resources lay buried not only in dirt and soil, but also in texts, laws, chronicles, charters, even churches and landscapes. This book uncovers them and shows how they shaped Early Medieval Britain. Infrastructures, material and symbolic, can work in ways that are not immediately obvious and exert an influence long after their creators have gone. Infrastructure can also rest dormant and be reactivated with a changed function, role and appearance. This is not a simple story of continuity and discontinuity: It is a story of adaptation and transformation, of how the Roman infrastructural past was used and re-used, and also how it influenced the later societies of Britain.

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